

THOU SHALT NOT KILL:
THE IMPACT OF THE JEDWABNE AFFAIR ON POLISH PERCEPTIONS OF
HISTORY AND CONCEPTS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND REDEMPTION

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of the Jedwabne Affair on Polish perceptions of mythology, responsibility, and redemption within public opinion. The Jedwabne Affair was a national controversy sparked by the publication of *Neighbors*. In it, author Jan Tomasz Gross describes a massacre of Jews in the town of Jedwabne by their Polish compatriots on July 10, 1941. This reality did not conform to Polish perceptions of history or mythology, which largely presented a victimized, honourable, noble, righteous, and innocent Pole incapable of committing such atrocities. The Jedwabne revelation debased Polish identity and precipitated a national debate that strove to reinstate a coherent narrative back into its mythology. The public's response varied and over time became increasingly polarized. The State and the Church were also involved vying for control of the fallout from the controversy. The result contributed to a stronger division between two ancient forms of Polish identity.

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Appendix A – The Press

Introduction

In the fall of 2000, Poland embarked on a debate that changed its self-perception. What was a taboo subject since the end of the Second World War, the issue of Polish-Jewish relations, had now become the centre of Polish debate and identity. For decades and generations, national history removed practically all mention of the significant Jewish presence, their rich culture, and their contribution to society and politics. A country once home to the largest European Jewish community, Poles had largely forgotten this section of society, its influences, and its rich past remembering only selective images of the Polish-Jewish relationship and their common suffering during the Second World War. This and more came into the fore in November 2000 – an unravelling of a subject that had gone unspoken for fifty-five years. Based on the events in a little town called Jedwabne, the debate became known as the Jedwabne Affair.

The Jedwabne Affair was a national controversy over the murder of the Jedwabne Jews by their Polish neighbours in the summer of 1941. The discussion began with two articles published in the largest daily, the *Gazeta Wyborcza*: Jacek Żakowski's interview with Tomasz Szarota entitled "The devil is in the details,"¹ and Żakowski's subsequent commentary "Every Neighbour Has a Name."² Through these articles, Żakowski and Szarota framed the terms of the debate by focusing it on the question of responsibility. Żakowski based his controversial assessment on a gradually evolving discussion that began a few months earlier.

¹ Jacek Żakowski. "Diabelskie szczegóły." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 18-19 Nov. 2000. p. 10; "The devil is in the details." *Wież*. April 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

² Jacek Żakowski. "Każdy sąsiad ma imię." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 18-19 Nov. 2000. p. 12; "Every neighbour has a name." *Wież*. April 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

In May 2000, Jan Tomasz Gross published a book that became the heart of the controversy. First published in Polish entitled *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*,³ the book recounts a story of mass murder in a small town called Jedwabne in the northeastern region of Poland not far from the major city of Białystok. The massacre took place on July 10, 1941 during which Poles, motivated by hate and greed, killed off the entire Jewish population of 1600. They did this by burning them alive in a nearby barn. This information shocked the Polish nation, and generated the largest national debate of its kind since the fall of communism. From Żakowski's article in November 2000 to the 60th anniversary in July 2001 of the Jedwabne massacre, the Jedwabne Affair dominated practically all media outlets with hundreds of printed articles, several books, and hours of television and radio coverage. Gross's book struck at the heart of Polish self-perceptions, values, and beliefs because it challenged some of the nation's most fundamental myths. Poland was no longer a victim but a victimizer. The story of Jedwabne introduced a reality that dissolved the coherence of established Polish World War Two mythology, which played a crucial role in shaping Poles' modern identity. Critics struggled to understand the shock, knowing that Polish history had been falsified and censored during the latter half of the twentieth century under communism. Yet many individuals held onto this history to which they had become closely attached and with which they identified. The debate took on many and various layered tangents, which made the discourse difficult to follow and challenging to comprehend. The fact that it was layered demonstrated the complexity of the role of memory and myth in the formation of identity.

³ Jan Tomasz Gross. *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*. (Pogranicze: Sejny, 2000).; *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

The debate raised serious questions over the role of history, German participation, Soviet conditioning, and anti-Semitism. Participants considered the implications of world opinion, the possibility of financial restitution, and the credibility of Polish historiography. For a period of nine months, the nation struggled to re-establish some form of coherence producing an increasingly divided society. The divisions were numerous. Each vision vied to create a monopoly of a particular conceptualization of Polish identity. Through both the State and the Church responses, these varied visions gained institutional legitimacy dividing society into two camps with two very distinct images of Polishness.

The Details of Jedwabne

According to the *Judaic Polish Dictionary*,⁴ Jedwabne remains the largest and most horrific known Polish attack on the Jewish community. On July 10, 1941, a few weeks after the German occupation of the Białystok region and one to two weeks after the establishment of regional administrations, the local Polish population of townsfolk and peasants tortured and burned alive the Jewish inhabitants of Jedwabne and the surrounding region. The victims included men, women, the elderly, children, and infants. Only a few Jews managed to escape. The number of victims varied and ranged from 900 to 1600 – the second number referring to the approximate population of the Jewish inhabitants in Jedwabne prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, which most likely changed in the following two years. A partial exhumation in June 2001 revealed two burial sites in which there were 335-440 bodies in total. Evidence suggests a high

⁴ Zofia Borzymińska and Rafał Żebrowski, eds. *Polski Słownik Judaistyczny*. Vol 1 and 2. (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2003).

probability of other burial sites throughout the town (victims to rape and murder), as well as an additional mass grave.⁵

Some critics during the debate argued that the genesis of the massacre stemmed from Jewish collaboration with the Soviet occupier (1939-1941); however, acts against Jews in this region were common prior to the war. They were usually motivated by local Polish sympathy to the National Democratic⁶ cause, which called for the expulsion of Jewish infiltration of Polish society. During the war, there were many other Jedwabne-like examples committed throughout the district. In neighbouring villages and towns, including Wąsocz Grajewski and Radziłów as well as over twenty other localities, a wave of murders and massacres swept the land. The extent of German participation, influence, and presence remains inconclusive.⁷

Following the war, the Polish Secret Police (UB)⁸ conducted a brief investigation into the Jedwabne killings leading to a series of trials in Łomża on May 16-17, 1949. Of the twenty-one Poles prosecuted for the crime, the court sentenced eleven people to 8-15 years in prison and one to death. In 1966, Szymon Datner working for the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH)⁹ published the first released information on the murders. The Regional Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes¹⁰ in Białystok conducted a subsequent investigation in 1967; however, it was not until May 2000 with Gross's publication that Jedwabne became widely known among the public. In the summer of

⁵ Rafał Żebrowski. "Jedwabne," *Polski Słownik Judaistyczny*. Vol 2. Zofia Borzymińska and Rafał Żebrowski, eds. (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2003) 334-336.

⁶ A political party of the late 19th century established by Roman Dmowski. The party was most commonly known for its anti-Semitism, and its program of Jewish extermination. See Brian Porter. *When Nationalism Began to Hate*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷ Rafał Żebrowski. "Jedwabne," *Polski Słownik Judaistyczny*. 334-336

⁸ Acronym of Urząd Bezpieczeństwa

⁹ Acronym of Żydowski Instytut Historyczny

¹⁰ Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskie

2000, the Polish Government instructed the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN)¹¹ to conduct a third official investigation into the Jedwabne events. In its preliminary conclusions released on July 10, 2002, the Institute found that Poles were primarily responsible for the murder of the Jedwabne Jews. The number of active and identifiable participants was at least forty. The Germans played a limited role in the massacre. In the first phase, they provided minimal assistance in the gathering of Jews into the town's square, who the Poles subsequently abused and harassed. In the second phase, the Germans at most watched the Poles lead the Jews to the barn to burn them alive.¹²

The overall assessment that Poles perpetrated the act on such a scale challenged Polish identity like no other issue since 1989. For until now, Polish myth created an image of the righteous, altruistic, heroic Pole who perpetually suffered at the hands of its enemies. Poles were the victims and not the victimizers, but Jedwabne demonstrated the opposite. It suggested an alternate history, a different knowledge of reality, that debased the values and traits upon which rested Polish history and mythology.

History and Mythology

The boundaries between history and myth are typically not very clear because myth is a concept particularly difficult to define straddling between historical reality based on validated truth and imagination, allegory, parables, and dreams.¹³ In the world-view of Western civilization, history "tells of true events that take a linear and progressive course, whereas the events of mythology are but phantom realities which are

¹¹ Instytut Pamięci Narodowej

¹² Rafał Żebrowski. "Jedwabne," *Polski Słownik Judaistyczny*. 334-336

¹³ Joanna Overing. "The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, or: 'The Reality of the Really Made-Up.'" *Myths and Nationhood*. Ed. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin. (New York: Routledge, 1997) 1.

assumed to have little relevance to any *real* world of action and experience.”¹⁴ Over the course of the past couple of decades, this belief has been challenged within the scholarship community. Through the study of other cultures, nationalisms, and identities, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists have realized the important and superceding role myth plays over history in forming nations and identity. History provides a context, a linear narrative, but myth creates the timeless story that binds a community into a cohesive entity. Myth contextualizes the world beyond the linear progression of historical time into a rudimentary and easily understood moral coherence of a perceived reality. In essence, myth deals with both a people’s “*reality postulates* about the world”¹⁵ and a “*moral universe of meaning*.”¹⁶ These postulates are perceptions and not historically validated truths. In other words, myth is not history. “It is the content of the myth that is important, not its accuracy as a historical account.”¹⁷ It establishes these realities and meanings by acting

as a means of standardization and of storage information. It provides the means for the members of a community to recognize that...they share a mindset...Through myth, boundaries are established within the community and also with respect to other communities. Those who do not share in the myth are by definition excluded...Myth is...a key element in the creation of closures and in the constitution of collectivities.¹⁸

Through myths, societies set communal standards and norms, which in turn, define the collective body as a whole by establishing simplified boundaries of values, traits, and beliefs. Thus, realities and meanings are predicated on the conditions set forth by myth in writing national identities.

¹⁴ Joanna Overing. “The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, or: ‘The Reality of the Really Made-Up.’” *Myths and Nationhood*. 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ George Schöpflin. “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths.” *Myths and Nationhood*. Ed. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin. (New York: Routledge, 1997) 19-20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 20.

The Function of Myths

To better understand the role of mythology within society, George Schöpflin designed an initial framework of analysis. He identified several visible functions of myth. First and foremost, myth serves as an instrument of self-definition delineating social membership, distinctiveness, and various conditions and limitations of belonging. It also serves as an instrument of identity transfer superimposing new identities over old ones, as well as a means of communication transcending barriers by establishing an illusion of community. Myth establishes the boundaries of political activity by means of cultural rules through standards and norms that bind the operative capacity of authority. It, furthermore, helps to maintain memory as long as the myth continues to resonate within society. Those with the power to control the resonance of myth through language and communication, usually political and intellectual elites, have the ability to mobilize masses that share similar definitions of collective identity. Therefore, to control myth is to enjoy substantial political and social authority. Myth can subsequently be used to block understanding of change and rational inquiry, as well as offer explanations of fate and failure. Finally, myth delimits a cognitive field, reducing historical complexity into simplified form thereby generating a sense of coherence. A danger arises when established coherence is not congruent with reality¹⁹ as was the case with Jedwabne. The realization of this gap between the content of the myth and the cognitive knowledge of reality triggered a strong and defensive reaction because it questioned Polish ability to control their own process of myth making.

¹⁹ George Schöpflin. "The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths." *Myths and Nationhood*. 22-27.

The following analysis of the Jedwabne Affair is divided into three parts. The first focuses on the public divisions that arose in response to the Jedwabne Affair. The divisions initially varied, but as the debate progressed, they gradually consolidated into two dominant visions of Polish identity. Each of the examined groups provided a unique perspective on the issue of responsibility in relation to Polish mythology, building on some visions while rejecting others. The interaction between these different approaches and their subsequent use of values and beliefs demonstrated the essential role of myth in self-perception, as well as the highly complicated process of identity formation. The issue that dominated the debate and underlay each approach was the reconciliation of self-perceptions based on a history embedded in mythology with a reality backed by hard evidence. In the form of a debate on responsibility, the various groups attempted to resolve this gap according to their particular image of identity. In so doing, they created two models. One model advocated individual and the other collective responsibility. Though somewhat apparent in public discourse, these two models gained greater solidification with the State and Church responses.

The State was divided in its approach to the Jedwabne controversy. Over the course of six consecutive events, various State actors vied to monopolize a vision of Polish identity. Instead, the plurality of actors, events, and disparate visions emphasized the various interests at play between the State apparatus and society. The interaction between the State and the public demonstrated the constant dialogue and discourse between these two elements of society. State actors rallied around particular public visions of responsibility, and on this basis, sought public support for their respective policies. In return, public visions sought institutional legitimacy and representative

authority. In this manner, Jedwabne became a politicized event with the President on one side and the Prime Minister on the other. Both public figures advocated a vision of identity that catered to a select portion of society solidifying public opinion into two categories.

Another important institutional pillar in Polish society was the Church, which also contributed to the division in public opinion. As it gradually engaged the public in discourse over Jedwabne, the conservative traditional base of the Church hierarchy found itself increasingly challenged by a liberal group of clerical intelligentsia and laity. The question that dominated this latter group revolved around the notion of moral responsibility, forgiveness, and redemption. As this unique small group of intellectuals introduced their vision that called for an acceptance of Polish perpetration and an demanded moral penance through a public and genuine apology, the conservative base continued to accuse others, laying blame and responsibility on historical circumstance and other nationalities. The hierarchy at the last moment succumbed to the pressure of the liberal elite, and in an act of symbolic significance, asked for forgiveness embarking on a road to redemption. This liberal victory did not unify the Church community. The division between the liberals and the conservatives had already been sown, and only enforced the division that stemmed from the State response and festered in public opinion.

The Jedwabne controversy led to a crisis of meanings, loss of coherence, and a feeling of threat or danger. The intellectual, political, and clerical elites fought to reassert their influence over this process. On the basis of the two largest circulated dailies, the *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Electoral Daily) and the *Rzeczpospolita* (Republic), the Jedwabne

Affair did not emerge as a discussion over history, as much as a struggle for the redefinition of mythological perceptions, values, and beliefs. The *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a “left-of-centre” newspaper, and the *Rzeczpospolita*, “right-of-centre”, did not capture the ideological and political “right,” which represents a significant portion of the Polish population. The lack of this perspective presents a challenge in portraying the gamut of Polish public opinion; nevertheless, the two sources provide a sufficiently thorough understanding and representative sample of the public who, torn in various directions, eventually established two visions of identity that ironically reflected a continuous internal struggle from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through the State and the Church, these two visions, found institutional legitimacy and set the stage for a starkly divided society.

Chapter 1

Public Opinion

Myths which are believed in tend to become true.

- George Orwell (*The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*)

Is discord going to show itself while we are still fighting, is the Jew once again worth less than another? Oh, it is sad, very sad, that once more, for the umpteenth time, the old truth is confirmed: "What one Christian does is his own responsibility, what one Jew does is thrown back at all Jews."

- Anne Frank (*The Diary of a Young Girl*)

Myth is a process that deals with "perception rather than historically validated truth."²⁰ It delimits values and beliefs that help define identity and nationhood, and is subject to the interpretation of all those who have a vested interest in its sense of meaning. Historians, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, journalists, pundits, clerics, politicians, media personalities all participated in the discourse surrounding the Jedwabne Affair. The controversy, however, lay not in the history but in the mythic perceptions that formed the general understanding of Polish identity, especially that of Polish-Jewish relations.

Myths of redemption and suffering, unjust treatment, a sense of an appointed destiny or mission, military valour, ethnic belonging and historical legitimacy, and kinship and shared descent developed narratives that spoke of the noble Pole, the *Polak-Katolik* (Polish-Catholic), the defender of Christendom, the Christ of Nations, and the pure Pole. The interpretation of these myths and their value were additionally affected by political circumstance. In a post-war environment characterized by real and illusionary censorship, the State strictly confined such topics as Polish-Jewish relations to an image that exclusively glorified the Pole as a hero and co-sufferer. In other words, the

²⁰ George Schöpflin. "The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths." *Myths and Nationhood*. 19.

Communist state apparatus through real censorship, concomitantly generating a culture that contributed to a high degree of self- and professional restraint based on illusions or perceptions of what could and could not be openly discussed, confined the discussion of Polish-Jewish relations to a non-critical glorification of the Pole during the Second World War vis-à-vis the Jews. This had the effect of forming a very specific image of Polish-Jewish relations based on a highly selective memory of World War Two history.

Communist censorship severed the capacity for Polish mythology to evolve in a context of dialogue and debate. Thus, Polish myths developed in monolithic isolation, unchallenged by open discourse of alternative interpretations and realities. Rather than mutual interaction, two separate and distinct narratives emerged – one in Poland and the other in the rest of the non-communist world. The collapse of communism opened the doors of isolation and gave rise and access to a wider interpretation of mythology.

After years of official censorship, control, and restricted speech, the possibility of public expression of various viewpoints, different values, and contradictory interests suddenly appeared; this, in turn, has gradually reorganized and altered individual, private convictions.²¹

Gross's book did not arise out of nothingness. It followed a gradual debate on Polish-Jewish relations that began in the late 1980s, but it was the post-communist democratic transformation that made *Neighbours* such a nationally profound controversy. Gross openly challenged Polish perceptions by introducing elements of Jewish historiography that questioned three commonly held myths used to explain Polish actions during the war: Polish-Jewish relations under German occupation, under Soviet occupation, and in the post-war period. By framing these myths around the issue of Polish responsibility, he debased their content, values, and beliefs. Threatened by the loss

²¹ Marek Ziółkowski. "Memory and Forgetting after Communism." *Polish Sociological Review*. 1.137 (2002): 7.

of collective coherence, the public response dominated by the intellectual elite was quick and varied. Attempting to re-instate order into growing chaos, clarity into confusion, certainty into unpredictability, each group struggled to restore order through separate visions of Polish identity based on different combinations of values and beliefs rooted in existing mythology.

Polish Mythology

The values and beliefs that dominated the Jedwabne debate found much of their strength and resonance in existing mythology. The Sarmatian myth, for example, presented the noble and honourable Pole rooted in the Western club of nations. The myth arose during the height of the Polish empire at the end of the Jagiellonian Dynasty (1386-1572) with the introduction of elected kings. A rising noble class, the *szlachta*, of unprecedented influence and power, created a myth based on an ancient indo-Iranian people who settled the plains of East Central Europe in the pre-Christian era as a means to generate their legitimacy of superiority through kinship of ancient descent. The myth characterized the Sarmatians as an ancient noble and honourable people, the best cavalymen of the Roman Empire.²² They were “heroic knights and defenders of the faith of the fatherland.”²³ This image imbued the *szlachta* with nobility, ancestral honour, and a self-appointed mission to defend home and country similar to the Sarmation cavalry and knighthood. The *szlachta* were to fight for the protection of their freedoms, of the “Nobles’ Commonwealth” (the *Rzeczpospolita Szlachecka*), that embodied the “Golden

²² Norman Davies. “Polish National Mythologies.” *Myth and Nationhood*. Ed. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin. (New York: Routledge, 1997) 143.

²³ Ray Taras. “Redefining National Identity After Communism: A Preliminary Comparison of Ukraine and Poland.” *National Identities and Ethnic Minorities in Eastern Europe*. Ed. Ray Taras. (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1998) 100.

Freedoms” (*Złota Wolność*) of the “Nobles’ Democracy.”²⁴ Though initially exclusive to the nobility, over time, the myth permeated into the general national make-up among the Polish elite creating the all-inclusive image of the *szlachetny* Pole, or the noble Pole incapable of disloyalty, dishonourable activity, and immorality. The elected mission evolved into a defence of the freedoms and liberties of Western civilization.²⁵ As Western Europe increasingly became a leader in technology, ideology, and culture, the East for Poles became a symbol of backwardness, primitiveness, and devolution. Consequently, since much of the Slavic family lies to the east of Poland, Poles have developed an aversion to the label of Slav considering it representative of the backward and unsuccessful Eastern world.²⁶ Poland’s membership in “East Central Europe” rather than in “Eastern Europe” was a manifest of this perception. The country’s drive to join both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union – two institutions that epitomized Western belonging – serve as further examples of the Sarmatian elected mission of Western belonging.²⁷

During the popular rise of the Sarmatian myth, the Polish elite developed another notion that reinforced its Western roots, as well as placed its values within Christian tradition: Poland as the Bulwark of Christendom, as an *antemurale christianitatis*. Situated on the eastern borderlands of Catholic Europe, Poland experienced regular incursions by Ottoman and Tatar forces during the seventeenth century. In response, the Polish elites proclaimed itself as the defender of Europe’s Christendom from the

²⁴ Ray Taras. “Redefining National Identity After Communism: A Preliminary Comparison of Ukraine and Poland.” *National Identities and Ethnic Minorities in Eastern Europe*. 100.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* 105.

²⁷ George Schöpflin. “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths.” *Myths and Nationhood*. 32.

encroaching armies of the Muslim invaders.²⁸ The myth also brought with it resignation and sacrifice, images of Poland as the last bastion of Christendom before the non-Christian world forced to suffer relentless incursions in the name of the West. Poles drew on this myth during their struggles with Orthodox and later Bolshevik Russia, and according to Davies, employed it in spiritual form against the decaying communist order.²⁹

The idea of the *Polak-Katolik*, Catholic Pole, emerged shortly after the Bulwark of Christendom and complimented Poland's Christian values. In the pivotal year of 1655, Sweden and Russia invaded Poland. Having overrun the country, the last remaining fortification standing was the Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra near Częstochowa. Protected by the holy icon of the "Black Madonna", the *Matka Boska Częstochowska*, the monastery withstood months of siege until the Swedish forces withdrew their armies. The King of Poland crowned the protectorate of the monastery, the Virgin Mary, as the "Queen of Poland" for having saved the Polish state. "Henceforth, Catholic Poles were taught not just to revere the Mother of God as their patron, but increasingly to regard Catholicity as the touchstone of their national identity."³⁰ The events of Jasna Góra formed a very specific boundary of Polish belonging introducing a new layer of kinship, Catholicism. Anyone not a Roman Catholic was somehow not truly a Pole. The National Democratic party, *Stronictwo Narodowe*, of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century employed *Polak-Katolik* as a fundamental criterion of Polishness, which created considerable friction for a sizeable portion of the Polish population who were of other

²⁸ Ray Taras. "Redefining National Identity After Communism: A Preliminary Comparison of Ukraine and Poland." *National Identities and Ethnic Minorities in Eastern Europe*. 100.

²⁹ Norman Davies. "Polish National Mythologies." *Myth and Nationhood*. 145.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 146.

religious and ethnic background including Jewish, Orthodox, Protestant, and Muslim.³¹

More recently, in the 2005 presidential elections, Donal Tusk, one of the main candidates, chose to marry his wife of twenty years in a religious ceremony for the first time. According to an analysis by the *International Herald Tribune*,

[p]olitical reasons suggest themselves, because during the campaign, Tusk has been battling a good deal of innuendo to the effect that there's something not quite 100 percent Polish about him. For religious conservatives in this country, who are campaigning ferociously against him, to have failed to have had a religious wedding exposes his suspect commitment to Polishness.³²

The *Polak-Katolik* myth remains quite alive among large segments of Polish society.

The Jagiellonian myth, on the other hand, generated images of tolerance, respect, the acceptance of diversity, progress and modernity. It originated, according to Davies, from the impact of the 1768 Uman massacres during which thousands of Polish Catholics and Jews were killed and burned alive in churches and synagogues by peasant Orthodox serfs. His interpretation of the myth held that against this historical backdrop arose the legendary figure of Mojsej Wernyhora who symbolized the unity, peace, and cultural apex of the Polish-Lithuanian "Golden Age" under the Jagiellonian dynasty.³³ Thus, Wernyhora became part of a Jagiellonian dream, "the idea that Poland's past should be shared by all the peoples who had once lived together in the *Rzeczpospolita*."³⁴ The concept promoted a vision of tolerance, fraternity, civic notions of citizenship based on equality, freedom, and liberty symbiotic with progress, modernity, and cultural achievement. The myth dominated government ideology during the dictatorship of Marshal Józef Piłsudski (1926-1935) in a time when Poland's population consisted of

³¹ Norman Davies. "Polish National Mythologies." *Myth and Nationhood*. 146.

³² Richard Bernstein. "Europa: Poles face clear choice in presidential runoff." *International Herald Tribune*. 21 Oct. 2005, 21 Oct. 2005 < <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/10/20/news/europa.php>>.

³³ Norman Davies. "Polish National Mythologies." *Myth and Nationhood*. 148.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 149.

large portions of ethnic minorities among them Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians.³⁵ During his regime, the ultra-nationalist and Catholic National Democratic party and its radical sub-movements were effectively marginalized and removed from political power, thus, mitigating much of their ability to shape public policy. Throughout the 1990s, the Jagiellonian concept served as a framework for several government initiatives to promote multiculturalism and tolerance of ethnic minorities as part of the democratic protection of human rights and the country's commitment to Western principles of democracy.³⁶ The vision relied upon a shared notion of descent bound by a common history rather than the exclusive variation built around notions of Christian membership.

Polish Catholicism gained considerable strength during the age of Romantic idealism and the rise of nationalist sentiment in the beginning of the nineteenth century. A country divided between three empires, struggling for national survival, Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz formalized a new myth that embodied narratives of redemption and suffering, unjust treatment, and military valour. Victimhood became the operative ideology. Following several military defeats for independence in the early and mid 1800s, Mickiewicz forged the metaphors and allegories to justify the Polish cause in an image that presented Poland as the *Chrystus narodów*, the Christ of Nations. The myth compared the increasing barrage of Polish military losses in their struggle for the resurrection of the old Polish kingdom to the suffering of Christ for the redemption of mankind.³⁷ Condemned by history to disfavour, the Christ of Nations inspired images of

³⁵ Norman Davies. "Polish National Mythologies." *Myth and Nationhood*. 149.

³⁶ Marius Gudonis. "Constructing Jewish Identity in Post-Communist Poland Part 2: Symbolic Jewishness or Cosmopolitan Polishness?" *East European Jewish Affairs*. 31.2 (2001): 48-50.

³⁷ Norman Davies. "Polish National Mythologies." *Myth and Nationhood*. 149.

helplessness, resignation, unjust treatment, and victimhood. Subsequent military losses further emphasized these notions. Poles lost the war with Russia in 1831, and again in 1863-1864. They lost to both the Soviet Russians and Nazi Germans in 1939, to the Germans in the Warsaw Rising of 1944, and to communism from 1945-1989. More recently, Polish victimhood has been used as a means of moral competition of ethnic suffering. Efforts to designate the 1940 Katyń massacre³⁸ as a Soviet inspired Polish genocide employed this belief as a moral competitive tool in establishing ethnic legitimacy in a world order increasingly defined around the Jewish Holocaust.³⁹

The images of suffering and victimhood based on a Messianic comparison generated beliefs in the supremacy of Catholic values embodying the Pole with righteousness and selflessness. Polishness, thus, became dominated by strong Catholic values with abstract, metaphysical overtones of religious redemptive mysticism imbued by an altruistic self-perception.⁴⁰ Poles were selfless, disinterested, and true to their values and vows.⁴¹ These qualities demanded the sacrifice of the nation for the freedom of all peoples of Europe. Thus, Poland's numerous military losses were valiant efforts in Poland's elected mission and process of redemption, exemplifying honour in sacrifice and suffering.⁴²

Polish mythology began utilizing violent imagery in the late nineteenth century with the rise of modern Poland characterized by increased political organization and

³⁸ The Katyń massacre was a mass execution of Polish citizens, mostly reserve officers, by the order of Soviet authorities in 1940.

³⁹ George Schöpflin. "The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths." *Myths and Nationhood*. 31.

⁴⁰ Marius Gudonis. "Constructing Jewish Identity in Post-Communist Poland Part 1: 'Deassimilation Without Depolonization'." *East European Jewish Affairs*. 31.1 (2001): 3.

⁴¹ Ireneusz Krzemiński. "Polish-Jewish Relations, Anti-Semitism and National Identity." *Polish Sociological Review*. 1.137 (2002): 39-41.

⁴² Norman Davies. "Polish National Mythologies." *Myth and Nationhood*. 151.

activity. During this period, the increasingly influential National Democratic party delineated the conceptual framework of the Piast concept. It was a myth of territory, foundation, and ethnogenesis, and a natural ally of the *Polak-Katolik*. The concept employed “integral nationalism” to establish a mystic union between the nation and the territory based on the perceived purity of Poland’s founding dynasty. Poland lived in ultimate purity and peace under the reign of the Piast dynasty, free of Jewish, German, Russian, and Ukrainian influences. “So the message was clear. All patriotic Poles had a duty to unite and drive all foreigners from their native soil: ‘Poland for Poles!’”⁴³ Exploiting the myth of *Polak-Katolik* and incorporating images of anti-Semitism, the National Democrats defined Polishness by blood and faith at the exclusion of all others. This was when Polish nationalism began to hate.⁴⁴

The Piast concept emerged as part of a movement that rejected the abstractions of historical progress in favour of sociological realism, which argued for an engineered intervention in order to eliminate social diversity that threatened Polish purity.⁴⁵ The Piast concept incorporated anti-Semitism into its make-up as an entry point for a doctrine of struggle and survival.⁴⁶ Jews in particular threatened the purity of the Piast mentality, for they represented a degenerate moral force on Polish society excelling at such immoral activities as cosmopolitanism and materialism – a complete antithesis to the Polish virtues exhibited by the *Polak-Katolik* and the Christ of Nations. The Jews, therefore, became an internal threat to the struggle and survival of the Polish nation and its mission to protect the Catholic values of Western Europe. The anti-Semitic elements of the Piast

⁴³ Norman Davies. “Polish National Mythologies.” *Myth and Nationhood*. 152.

⁴⁴ Brian Porter. *When Nationalism Began to Hate*. 176.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 177.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 182.

concept eventually called for the metaphysical extermination of Poland's Jewry.⁴⁷ The National Democrats used this ideology to advocate the complete removal and extraction of Jews from Polish society. "It is perhaps futile for historians to discuss how much of the Piast Concept was true and how much was false. The point is that millions of Poles believed it, and many still do."⁴⁸

In the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections, Poles witnessed the open politicization of this struggle between a Piast and Jagiellonian Poland. The Law and Justice party led by Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński backed by conservative support derived from those who subscribed to the Piast ideology marginally won the *Sejm*, the lower house, and the presidency against the more perceptually inclusive Civic Platform party. During the elections, the *International Herald Tribune* described Kaczyński as "steeped in Polish tradition...religious, outspokenly nationalistic, a mayor who banned the annual gay pride parade in Warsaw,"⁴⁹ whereas the same article described Tusk as someone who stood for

a kind of modern secular liberalism, a nonjudgmental, morally relativist stance of the sort that might be found, say in a Paris café or on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. He is also an economic liberal in the European sense of the term, a believer, like Milton Friedman or Ronald Reagan, in the stultifying effect of too much government, the liberating power of the market.⁵⁰

While Tusk struggled to communicate a balanced approach to various Polish problems including foreign policy, Kaczyński focused on Tusk's Polishness. Aside from feeling the sudden need to demonstrate his Catholicity by having a religious ceremony with his wife of twenty years, Tusk also had to defend his position vis-à-vis the Germans. Kaczyński's

⁴⁷ Brian Porter. *When Nationalism Began to Hate*. 181.

⁴⁸ Norman Davies. "Polish National Mythologies." *Myth and Nationhood*. 153.

⁴⁹ Richard Bernstein. "Europa: Poles face clear choice in presidential runoff." *International Herald Tribune*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

camp accused Tusk's dead father of having been part of the German Wehrmacht during the Second World War. The implication was that Donald Tusk had some soft-spot for the Germans, and was willing to compromise Polish interests. Kaczyński argued that "[i]n these matters that constitute a threat to Poland – not a military threat, but a serious one – we deeply need a president who is absolutely firm, not looking for compromise like other candidates."⁵¹ The division between these two candidates reflected a very similar division within society representing the two competing visions of Polish identity that were set by the Jedwabne Affair. Tusk won the support of certain members of the clerical elite, two former presidents (Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Lech Wałęsa), as well as the business community and those who prospered in the post-communist system. Kaczyński won the support of the rural population, the unemployed, the Catholic clergy, and segments of the youth.⁵² The divisions were, thus, geographic, economic, and social. Though they found political expression in the 2005 elections, these disparate visions had already been set by the Jedwabne Affair. Depending on how each group or person reacted to Jedwabne determined their political orientation in the immediate aftermath of the controversy, as well as four years after in the presidential and parliamentary elections. The Jedwabne Affair and the myths it challenged, used, and redefined, revitalized the traditional conservatives and the political right giving such individuals as Kaczyński the possibility and opportunity to gain considerable support and win a political victory.

⁵¹ Richard Bernstein. "Europa: Poles face clear choice in presidential runoff." *International Herald Tribune*.

⁵² Judy Dempsey. "Kaczynski is elected president in Poland." *International Herald Tribune*. 24 Oct. 2005, 24 Oct. 2005 < <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/10/23/news/poland.php>>.

“Some of the myths are as dead as dodos,”⁵³ argues Norman Davies an expert on Polish history. “The myths of the *Polak-Katolik* or of ‘Piast Poland’ seem to have little point in a mono-ethnic country whose frontiers are no longer under threat.”⁵⁴ He may be right that Poles no longer refer to these myths by name; however, the values and beliefs generated by these myths have survived over time for they continue to find resonance in Poland’s written history, as well as political parlance demonstrated by the 2005 elections. The Sarmatian myth of nobility, heroism, and honour; the Bulwark of Christendom of mission and sacrifice; the *Polak-Katolik*; the altruistic, victimized Christ of Nations; the Polish purity of the Piast concept; and the tolerant, civic, and modern Jagiellonian concept continue to surface in the narratives of Polish discourse, especially its historiography as demonstrated by the Jedwabne controversy. The ever-present use of these myths illustrates their resonant capacity within Polish culture, identity, and historiography.

Competing Visions of History

The experiences of the Second World War and the Holocaust had a substantial impact in governing Polish-Jewish relations. With the divisions brought on by the war and the communist period, Poles and Jews emerged with very distinct and select sets of memories generating two separate parallel histories. Jewish scholars in the non-communist world developed a version of history in the context of an open society subject to scrutiny and dissent. Polish historiography largely developed under censorship imposed by a communist regime, and thus, remained shielded and isolated from discourse

⁵³ Norman Davies. “Polish National Mythologies.” *Myth and Nationhood*. 156.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

and dissent both internal and external. The influence of myth, with its values and beliefs of heroism, nobility, loyalty, honour, altruism, suffering, and purity went unchecked, and so in this closed environment, Polish historians wrote a history of Polish-Jewish relations that increasingly adopted mythological attributes rather than validated narratives of reality. When Gross introduced his critique of Polish historiography, he actually challenged this Polish conceptualized history based on myth and self-perceptions and not reality. In this manner, Polish and Jewish versions of the same events collided revealing the gap between myth and reality in a history that was more an expression of self-perception rather than a careful examination of memory.

The description of Polish-Jewish relations in *Neighbours* originated with Gross's earlier work *The Ghastly Decade*. Published only a few years before, it outlined three particular sets of myths dealing with various aspects of World War Two relations. The first of the three essays tackled the issue of Polish apathy in helping Jews under German occupation; the second addressed life under Soviet occupation; and the third analyzed Polish misperceptions that resulted in an intensification of the belief in *żydokomuna*, Jewish-communism. His interpretation set the tone of the Jedwabne debate by portraying a society affected by widespread anti-Semitism, which excused its behaviour through a series of myths that presented the Pole as a helpless, suffering victim; heroic, noble, and altruistic; loyal and honourable.

Polish-Jewish Relations Under German Occupation

The version of history that Gross challenged was one commonly advocated by such Polish historians as Władysław Bartoszewski, who employed images of perpetual

suffering, victimization, and heroism to explain Polish apathy, to mitigate collaborative activities, and to exalt acts of bravery. Though some of his works were published in the West, they were not premised and formed in an atmosphere of constant and open discussion and dialogue. Rather, his works largely reflected the official governing ideology accepted and advocated in Poland. His co-authored multi-volume book, *He Is From My Fatherland*,⁵⁵ for example, exclusively described Polish heroism in saving Jews during the war denying the assertion that Poles were apathetic. Aside from a marginal few pages dedicated to those Poles who hindered Jewish assistance, Bartoszewski's book was solely complimentary and contained virtually no critical assessment of Polish-Jewish relations during the war. It, thus, became the official biblical and only text of Polish-Jewish relations written for mass consumption from the 1960s to the mid-1980s.

According to Bartoszewski, Poles and Jews were both victims of German brutality, suffering from a constant fear of death. Nazi policy, he argued, targeted Poles and Jews separately and for different reasons but their fates collided, merged, and unified under the same threat. As the Nazis slated the Jews for complete eradication, the Germans also administered a policy of liquidation of the Polish intelligentsia.⁵⁶ Moreover, when the extermination of Jews began in the eastern provinces in the summer of 1941 with the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis prevented Poles from helping the Jewish population by issuing a decree that threatened Poles with immediate death for any delivered assistance.⁵⁷ He depicted Poles as helpless, suffering victims overwhelmed

⁵⁵ Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna. *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939-1945*. (Warsaw: Znak, 1966).

⁵⁶ Władysław Bartoszewski. "Polish-Jewish relations in occupied Poland, 1939-1945." *The Jews in Poland*. Ed. Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986) 160.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 152.

by the German war machine and incapacitated by fear. The fear drove Poles to self-isolation resulting in resignation and passivity.⁵⁸ Because of German policy, Poles lived in abject poverty “absorbed in the day-to-day battle for the most basic means of survival.”⁵⁹ Thus, Poles were victims forced into a state of apathy derived from a feeling of helplessness caused by German inspired fear. Even those who were forced to cooperate did so out of desperation and fear, for they were pawns of an overwhelming system of coercion.

Gross rejected this explanation offering an alternative based on the Jewish version. It described a Polish society immobilized toward the Jewish plight not out of fear but out of widespread anti-Semitism. The Polish failure to show greater support of their Jewish co-citizens came from prejudice and discrimination, and not a sense of victimization, helplessness, and resignation.⁶⁰ Jewish historians such as Yisrael Gutman widely supported such interpretations. Gutman argued that though the Germans stripped the Poles of all national rights and that Poles did not participate in any official capacity in the anti-Jewish actions of the Nazi regime, the Polish underground was a powerful and well-organized quasi-state apparatus that had the ability to do more. Prior to 1942, there was simply no interest or desire. Poles did not feel a sense of shared persecution or a sense of solidarity, but expressed feelings of widespread anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism among Poles was a serious and growing problem prior to and during the war, corroborated by numerous personal accounts and press publications. The accounts portrayed a people that desired the removal of the Jewish population from public and

⁵⁸ Władysław Bartoszewski. “Polish-Jewish relations in occupied Poland, 1939-1945.” *The Jews in Poland*. 160.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 153.

⁶⁰ Jan Tomasz Gross. *Upiorna dekada*. (Krakow: AWA, 1998) 31-42.

economic life, and a ban on their return. The voluminous underground press regularly printed such held beliefs and opinions.⁶¹

Barbara Engelking appreciated the Polish position a bit more than Gutman, but she agreed with him on his overall assessment. While Poles actively endorsed participation in the underground movement, in conspiracies, and in the like, against both the Nazi Germans and the Soviet Russians, there was no endorsement to hide Jews, she argued. “Jews found themselves outside the realm of the moral and civil responsibility of the Poles. They were excluded from a world in which the rules of brotherhood applied.”⁶² Poles were, nevertheless, justified to fear for their lives. The Nazi occupation brutalized the Polish population, and slated Poles for biological eradication. Nazi terror focused Polish attention on self-preservation. Engelking continued, “[t]he suffering of Poles and Jews was not a shared, identical experience; during the occupation they suffered separately and suffered differently.”⁶³ Poles perceived World War Two as another extension of Poland’s historic struggle against the domination of Germany and Russia. Because the Russian threat was not as serious for the Jews as the German threat, and whereas Poles perceived both Russia and Germany as equal dangers, these different priorities gave rise to questions of loyalty and betrayal. Unlike the Poles who did not need the Jews, the Jews needed the help of Poles in order to survive. “Their lives depended upon Polish neighbourly love, mercy, honesty, hatred, apathy, or greed.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Yisrael Gutman. “Polish and Jewish historiography on the question of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II.” *The Jews in Poland*. Ed. Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986) 177-183.

⁶² Barbara Engelking. “Reflections on the Subject of Polish-Jewish Relations During World War II.” *Polish Sociological Review*. 1.137 (2002): 103.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 104.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 105.

The largest conflict remained economic. Poles expressed considerable satisfaction with the removal of Jewish influence from the economic sphere, argued Engelking. During the war, Poles routinely pillaged property of deported Jews. Eventually, Poles became numb to the Jewish plight, and even profited by their elimination.⁶⁵ The Jewish version, thus, saw Polish apathy as a symptom of deeply held anti-Semitism and not some victimized sense of helplessness and paralysis generated by German fear.

Polish historiography had to contend also with its social margins and their activities during the war, especially those of the *szmalcownicy*, blackmailers – the antithesis to Polish nobility, honour, and selflessness. The *szmalcownicy* were individuals, usually of Polish descent, who extorted bribes from Jews in return for their safety. This group, according to Bartoszewski, was an insignificant element of the Polish population, and their activities paled in comparison to those of the Germans. Aside from marginalizing this group, Bartoszewski also portrayed them as victims, pawns of a German system of incentives that inspired informants, collaborators, extortionists, and blackmailers.⁶⁶

Another approach used by Bartoszewski to mitigate the acts of the *szmalcownicy* and to compensate for this depraved example of Polishness, was to place emphasis on the heroic, noble, and altruistic actions of those Poles who risked their lives to save Jews. Though this group also represented the margins of Polish society, Bartoszewski – a founder of such organizations as Żegota, which during the war saved many Jewish lives – exalted their acts creating a representative illusion of Polish World War Two heroism,

⁶⁵ Barbara Engelking. "Reflections on the Subject of Polish-Jewish Relations During World War II." *Polish Sociological Review*. 105.

⁶⁶ Władysław Bartoszewski. "Polish-Jewish relations in occupied Poland, 1939-1945." *The Jews in Poland*. 158-159.

nobility, bravery, selflessness, and sacrifice. No other European community demonstrated this kind of “wholesale sacrifice to save others.”⁶⁷

According to Gutman, such groups as Żegota were very small and few and did not start their operations until 1942. Żegota, for example, was not officially recognized and included into the underground Polish State apparatus until 1943. The subsequent help was far too little, and by 1943, far too late.⁶⁸ Gutman did not dismiss the value assigned to the heroism and sacrifice of those who helped save Jews. He challenged Bartoszewski’s over-emphasis of these heroic Poles and the under-emphasis of the *szmalcownicy*. Both these groups were marginal elements of Polish society and did not adequately explain overall social apathy.⁶⁹ The majority passively or even actively supported Nazi policy to rid Poland of its Jewry, argued Engelking. Those who helped to save Jews and those who helped destroy them remained the outer extremities. The majority of Poles remained ambivalent in face of the tragedy. The lack of solidarity and “a climate of condemnation for the denouncers caused the social fringes to feel totally immune to punishment; they blackmailed Jews on the streets in broad daylight without the least feeling of guilt and shame.”⁷⁰ Those who did help save Jews, argued Nechama Tec, were those who felt themselves to be margins of Polish society.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Władysław Bartoszewski. “Polish-Jewish relations in occupied Poland, 1939-1945.” *The Jews in Poland*. 156.

⁶⁸ Yisrael Gutman. “Polish and Jewish historiography on the question of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II.” *The Jews in Poland*. 182-186.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 182-183.

⁷⁰ Barbara Engelking. “Reflections on the Subject of Polish-Jewish Relations During World War II.” *Polish Sociological Review*. 106.

⁷¹ Nechama Tec. *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Polish-Jewish Relations Under Soviet Occupation

Polish and Jewish official historiographies were quite silent on the issue of mutual relations under Soviet occupation. Gross was, in effect, the first to challenge not only the Polish version but also the Jewish in this respect.

The myths depicting Polish-Jewish relations under Soviet occupation defined the Pole in alteristic reference to the Jew. The first narrative, argued Gross, described the Jew greeting the invading Red Army. As Soviet troops marched into to take control of the eastern half of Poland in 1939, Jews rushed to greet the army with enthusiasm and glee. In the eyes of the Polish nation, this act was one of great betrayal. Jews sided with Poland's long-standing enemy, the Russians, and as such, became enemies of the Polish people.⁷² The myth portrayed the Jews as disloyal, dishonourable, and ungrateful for the hospitality that Poles provided for hundreds of years. By defining the Jew in this manner, the myth equally implied that the Pole was honourable and loyal, incapable of betrayal and treason. In response, Gross argued that the people who greeted the Red Army did it for various usually individual reasons and not as national representatives. Many cities, including Polish politicians and officials, greeted the Soviets as allies and liberators. Certain ethnic minorities saw them as a means to achieve their own nationalist aims for independence. Others greeted the army out of fear or the fear of non-conformity. Social class also played a role. The poor and proletariat, disadvantaged and marginalized saw emancipation in Soviet-communist ideology. Poles, Jews, Ukrainians greeted the Russians, as did the poor, marginalized, and displaced.⁷³ In providing alternative motivations, suggesting that greeting the Red Army was not isolated to the Jews alone,

⁷² Jan Tomasz Gross. *Upiorna dekada*. 61-72.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Gross debased this notion that Jews were the sole group to welcome a long standing national enemy. The very idea that Poles participated failed to conform to self-perceptions of loyalty, nobility, and patriotism.

The second common myth under Soviet occupation identified the Jew as a Soviet collaborator. Bartoszewski held that eastern Poles witnessed Jewish collaboration with the Soviet army in the deportation of thousands of Poles, which the Poles endured as a great hardship and part of the Soviet repressive regime. Moreover, together with other national minorities, Jews waged pro-Soviet acts against the Polish underground army.⁷⁴ Similar to the previous myth, the chosen symbols of Polish-Jewish relations under Soviet occupation depicted the Jew as disloyal and untrustworthy, self-interested and treacherous. Conversely, the Pole did not represent any of these values, for he was loyal and honourable, a true patriot, incapable of treason. The myth had the additional component of presenting Poles as victims at the hands of both the Jews and Soviets. Jewish collaboration with the Soviets in the deportations of Polish families into Siberia placed an emphasis on the perpetual suffering of the Polish nation.

Gross presented a very different image wherein the Pole played the greater collaborative role. Looking at the lists of public officials within the Soviet administration, he argued, families of Poles held most of the administrative positions. There were some Jews in the police, administration, and the NKVD, but no evidence suggested mass Jewish collaboration with the Soviet system.⁷⁵ Nor did he argue that the Poles were the only victims of the deportations. The deportations proportionately affected three times

⁷⁴ Władysław Bartoszewski. "Polish-Jewish relations in occupied Poland, 1939-1945." *The Jews in Poland*. 148-151.

⁷⁵ Jan Tomasz Gross. *Upiorna dekada*. 76-80.

more Jews than Poles.⁷⁶ Thus, Gross presented a very different reality in which the Pole collaborated with the enemy and was not the only victim of Soviet persecution.

Polish-Jewish Relations in Post-War Poland

Elements of the myths that developed under Soviet occupation included reference to a growing perception among Poles of *żydokomuna*, Jewish-communism, which became extremely popular following the war. According to Gross, *żydokomuna* attributed communism as a Jewish creation, dominated, organized, and disseminated by Jews. The myth described the Jew as a foreign element, an enemy of the Polish nation who helped impose a communist order that enslaved the Polish people. This perception stemmed from a belief in a Jewish dominance of the communist system represented by a few high-ranking security officials.⁷⁷ *Żydokomuna* not only perpetuated the continued vilification of the Jew as an alien to Polish purity, but also the ever-lasting and destined state of suffering and victimization.

Once again, Gross challenged this conceptualization by contextualizing the fragile position of the Jewish community in an environment marked by continued violence and pogroms such as Kielce.⁷⁸ Aside from a few high profile Communists of Jewish descent who had withdrawn completely from the Jewish community, Jews were no different than the majority of Poles other than one exception. The remaining Jews had to rely on State security to provide them with protection against their Polish neighbours, which led to a

⁷⁶ Jan Tomasz Gross. *Upiorna dekada*. 83.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 93-95.

⁷⁸ Kielce pogrom refers to the events on July 4, 1946, in the Polish town of Kielce, when forty Polish Jews were massacred and eighty wounded out of about two hundred Holocaust survivors who returned home after World War II. Among victims were also two Gentile Poles. While far from the deadliest pogrom against the Jews, the pogrom was especially significant in post-war Jewish history, as the attack took place 14 months after the end of World War II, well after the Nazis were defeated.

perception of Jewish collaboration and participation in the communist system.⁷⁹ Gross was not the first to question this stereotype. Krystyna Kersten, a Polish historian, examined the relationship between Poles and Jews and the perception of *żydokomuna* in the evolution of post-war anti-Semitism in Poland. She concluded that whatever the perceptual reasons of Jewish participation in the communist system, *żydokomuna* became part of State policy accepted, tolerated, and encouraged by an apathetic society.⁸⁰

Polish historiography constructed a narrative of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War dominated by constructs and values of heroism, sacrifice, and victimhood, while creating an image of the Jew as antithetical to the valour and altruism embodied by the Pole. Under German occupation, the Nazis forced the majority of Poles into a state of apathy toward the Jewish plight. Those who cooperated with the Germans did so out of fear. The *szmalcownicy* were a small few unrepresentative group of the Polish population, unlike the valour and altruism of those who saved thousands of Jews. The Soviet occupation defined the Pole in alterity to the Jew. The Jew was disloyal and self-interested greeting the Red Army and collaborating with the enemy. By so doing, the Jews became equal oppressors of the Polish nation. This oppression continued into the post-war period as Jews dominated the ranks of the communist party, and who were responsible for the disappearance of countless pure Poles. Gross challenged these myths portraying a conformist anti-Semitic Pole, who cooperated with the Germans and the Soviets, continuing their struggle against the Jews into the post-war order. Thus, Poles were not the righteous heroes and innocent victims as described by their own history.

⁷⁹ Jan Tomasz Gross. *Upiorna dekada*. 94-108.

⁸⁰ Krystyna Kersten. *Polacy, Żydzi, Komunizm*. (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992) 179.

Gross's challenge became more one of identity rather than anything else, for it fundamentally questioned the essence of the Polishness.

Polish Responsibility

The public elite struggled to fit this newly proposed reality within the context of their existing national narrative. They did so by reformulating their values and beliefs into alternative stories based on different conceptualizations of identity. Some groups shared a vision that framed the Jedwabne reality as another turning point in the country's road to democratic progress. Others balanced this approach with one that did not reject the myths of old. Yet another group held fast to a collective notion of innocence by rejecting Gross's interpretation as another targeted attack against the Polish nation. Among all the approaches, myth played a pivotal role in shaping each response to responsibility according to a particular vision of the universe of meaning.

The debate over the question of responsibility divided public opinion into six identifiable groups of which five found outlets of expression in the mainstream press. The first group rejected the limitations and constraints of the collective in favour of the ultimate and independent freedom of choice of the individual. The second group was in direct response to the first. "Collectivists" designed a highly sophisticated model of responsibility that outlined the relationship between the individual and society within and across time. Two sub-branches of the collectivist approach included the moralists and conditionalists. The moralists placed emphasis on Polish altruism and redemption, while the conditionalists applied degrees of blame based on historical circumstances and legacy. Generally, the collectivist model defined itself in response to the individualist

approach but not in alteristic form. The collectivists were also individualists except they recognized the limitations placed on the individual by the collective. Both views, in the context of Jedwabne, originated from the same source: Western ideology. This explains why when dealing with issues such as Polish-German or Polish-Russian relations, the individualists disappear as a clearly identifiable entity and become part of the collectivist model. Both models incorporate the individual at the centre of their analysis. This phenomenon suggests the fluidity of these groups rather than some form of absolute or static state. In dealing with Jedwabne, however, the individualists did assert a visible presence. Perhaps they did so because the identifiable distinctions between Poles and Jews, be it cultural, social, or historical, are far more blurred than those between Poles and Germans and Russians. In other words, unlike the Germans and Russians who had their own and distinct sources of culture and history, the Jews intrinsically shared this link with Poles, which made the separation of these two groups a bit more difficult.

The reactionaries and rejectionists employed the individualists approach but as a tool in order to maintain their particular version of the Polish collective. The reactionaries accepted Polish perpetration, but through a selective historiography that upheld Polish innocence. Unlike the reactionaries, the rejectionists employed the same selective historical approach but rejected Polish responsibility (collective and individual) in its entirety. This group dominated many of the smaller Catholic-nationalist and populist publications, and found little attention in the mainstream media. There was very little difference between these two argumentative approaches. In the final analysis, the reactionaries and rejectionists easily consolidated into one group that came to oppose the collectivists.

The interaction between all these groups not only reflected the divisions over competing visions of identity, the cultural power of mythology as a means of transmitting values and beliefs, and the ongoing, perpetually changing, and delicate process of myth making, but also the layered and complex nature of both the individual and the collective. Depending on the particular subject in relation to Jedwabne, many of the individual opinions expressed crossed and concomitantly utilized several these approaches. This generalized typology is not designed to dismiss the complexity of identity. Rather, it permits an understanding of the tools and methods used in the attempt to reassert coherence into a national narrative rocked by a harsh reality and of the political trends and divisions it set within society.

Individual Responsibility

Jacek Żakowski, a journalist and co-founder for the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, began the national debate in a November 2000 article⁸¹ with a response to Gross's concluding remarks over responsibility: "[f]or indeed, the 1600 Jedwabne Jews... were killed neither by the Nazis, the NKVD, nor the UB, but by society."⁸² It was unclear what Gross meant by the term "society", whether he referred it to the Jedwabne community or generalized it to include all of Polish society. In either case, the use of the term was fairly accurate in both senses. Jedwabne was a sophisticated and highly well organized event planned by resident Poles with the purpose to eliminate the town's entire Jewish population. In this context, the local town society bore a considerable degree of responsibility. Secondly, Jedwabne exemplified only one of at least twenty known similar killings within the

⁸¹ Jacek Żakowski. "Każdy sąsiad ma imię." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Every neighbour has a name." *Więź*.

⁸² Jan Tomasz Gross. *Sąsiedzi*. 121.

region. Thus, Gross's use of the term "society" accurately described the events of the local community and the entire region. Żakowski, however, understood the assessment as the latter, and accused Gross of unfairly using large-scale ethnic quantifiers. Żakowski argued that such terms led to a falsified notion of collective responsibility, which in his opinion, did not exist. Every person was individually responsible, and thus, he presented a prototype model of the individualist approach.

Individual responsibility emphasized the ultimate independence of the person based on his ability to influence and control. "Everyone of us is responsible for himself. None of us has the right to rebuke anyone else for his countrymen or forebears... There is no responsibility for grandfathers and great-grandfathers... because those not yet born had no way of restraining them."⁸³ Responsibility was, therefore, limited to the direct actions and influences of individual members restricted in time to the present with no connection to the past. "Nor is there any responsibility for contemporary countrymen or non-countrymen if we can have no influence on their actions."⁸⁴ Żakowski further limited the notion to the immediate reach of a person's actions. The individual could only be held accountable to the extent of his impact on the people in his direct sphere of influence. Żakowski did not negate the existence of a collective. He accepted it on the condition of individual choice. The individual had the independent choice to belong to or reject society in its entirety or in part. Thus, Żakowski felt that responsibility applied to the extent that "I am, or feel myself to be, responsible for the crime."⁸⁵ Żakowski did acknowledge that moral conviction limited a person's choice. Moral imperative stemmed

⁸³ Jacek Żakowski. "Każdy sąsiad ma imię." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Every neighbour has a name." *Więź*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

from the knowledge of the past, which required the individual to participate in the formation of a collective response that secured a safer future.⁸⁶ Though no bond existed between the present and the past, individual responsibility recognized a bond of choice between the present and the future. Regardless of moral imperative, the individual still made the choice to participate.

Żakowski's inclusion of moral conviction as a limiting factor on individual choice in the context of his model of responsibility did not adequately explain the nature of moral standards and norms as collective constructions within the present and across time; nevertheless, his core argument presented a viable and appealing model. Applying this definition to the Jedwabne massacre, those directly responsible were the persons actively involved in the crime. Responsibility began and ended with their participation. Those in attendance but passive in action were not culpable, nor were the community and the nation. As abstract formless and shapeless concepts, the community and nation could not exert any direct influence on the individuals. The perpetrators chose of their own volition to participate of their own free will. This interpretation resembled a legalistic approach that identified responsibility exclusively on the basis of an individual's acts, disregarding the possible broader implications of various social factors that may have contributed to the crime. The individualist position served to shift all culpability and blame upon the perpetrator concomitantly isolating it in the past with no links to the present. This position allowed others to perpetuate the idea of Polish innocence. In Żakowski's case, this was his own personal innocence, but when interpreted in the broader national context, his view upheld notions of collective righteousness. Supporters of the visions

⁸⁶ Jacek Żakowski. "Każdy sąsiad ma imię." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Every neighbour has a name." *Więź*.

that rejected collective responsibility frequently applied Żakowski's philosophy as a means to marginalize the perpetrators, while keeping to traditional perceptions of identity. In this manner, individual responsibility became a tool against the collectivists that allowed the reactionaries and rejectionists to maintain their old concepts of Polishness.

Collective Responsibility

The collectivists believed that responsibility incorporated both the individual and the collective who were bound together in an unending relationship between the past, present, and future. Collective responsibility, according to Krystyna Skarżynska, a professor of psychology, was the product of two interactive processes. The first included the individual, and the second included the collective. Both constantly changed and evolved over time, and neither was exclusively independent of the other. A person's actions were in large part dependent on the situation in which he or she operated, and the situation depended to considerable extent on that person's participation.⁸⁷ The interactive process was also indirect. This was best measured in times of loneliness when "we feel uneasy when we violate group norms and expectations."⁸⁸ Skarżynska did not disagree with Żakowski's conceptualization of individual choice; however, she argued that social factors predicated and shaped many of those choices. The process by which individuals made their choice was itself conditioned by the interaction between the person and society. The Jedwabne perpetrators chose to act individually, which made them responsible; nevertheless, society helped to condition their particular choice, which made

⁸⁷ Krystyna Skarżynska. "Zbiorowe wyobrażenia, wspólna wina." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 25 Nov. 2000: 16.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

society also responsible. The killers operated within a community that tolerated, shared, and even re-enforced myths and stereotypes that idolized the purity of the *Polak-Katolik* and vilified the Jew as a communist sympathizer and Soviet collaborator. Through the transmission of these narratives, the collective fostered a society that culturally encouraged the perpetrators' actions by providing them with a sense of acceptability and permission.⁸⁹ Collective responsibility represented the symbiotic relationship between a person and a society, their interaction, and their mutual impact on individual and collective action.

Konstanty Gebert, a journalist for the *Gazeta Wyborcza* often writing under the pseudonym of Dawid Warszawski, extended this relationship across time establishing the link between the past and the present. In response to Żakowski, he agreed that every person had the right to choose his form of identity. The individual could opt out of the collective consensus, and negate any personal responsibility attached to that particular community; however, "it should be equally clear to Żakowski that his individual opting out of the community of the implicated does not cancel out the existence of that community"⁹⁰ nor its inherited responsibility. Unlike Skarżynska who disagreed with Żakowski's capability of fully opting out of the collective, Gebert acknowledged that possibility, but not as the defining factor of responsibility. According to Gebert, as long as a group of individuals continued to associate with some form of group identity, that community continued to exist beyond the one individual. Society was an idea unrestricted by the beginning and the end of any of its individual constituent members. It operated as

⁸⁹ Krystyna Skarżynska. "Zbiorowe wyobrażenia, wspólna wina." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 25 Nov. 2000: 16.

⁹⁰ Dawid Warszawski. "Odpowiedzialność i jej brak." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 9-10 Dec. 2000: 20.;

"Responsibility and the lack of responsibility." *Więź*. April 2001

<<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

a continuum across vast periods of time incorporating multiple generations, thus, binding the past with the present. An individual who chose to belong to a collective had to also accept the links that made it a continuum.

To the same degree that I identify with some collective, I bear consciously and by choice a responsibility for the things it has done, good and evil, now and in the past. As opposed to the furnishing of the individual identity according to one's choice, responsibility is a package deal. No one can opt out of Polish responsibility for the crime of Jedwabne, let us say, while at the same time remaining entitled to forgive anyone in the name of the Poles for crimes committed against Poles, no matter who committed them.⁹¹

An individual's capacity to opt out of the collective did not absolve the community, nor did it negate the cultural inheritance and responsibility of its past. Collective responsibility was a relationship not only between a person and his community, but also a temporal bond between the present and the past.

Marek Beylin, also a journalist for the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, provided the second fundamental bond, that of the present and the future. Through the process of identity construction, both the individual and the collective assumed responsibility for their present condition and simultaneously for the image they desired to pass on into the future. Beylin argued that individual identities were the product of multiple influences including those of the surrounding collectivities. From family, to friends, to clubs, each smaller community contributed to a person's identity. That person then developed his own notions of the greater collective body. The combinations and permutations of communal influences resulted in different visions of collective belonging within the same overarching national ideology, giving rise to competing notions of identity each striving to establish a monopoly over an all-encompassing vision of nationality. This vision served two purposes. Beylin argued, first it provided a present state of being. Second, it

⁹¹ Dawid Warszawski. "Odpowiedzialność i jej brak." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Responsibility and the lack of responsibility." *Więź*.

generated a model of values, standards, and norms that the present desired to live by in the future.⁹² Collective responsibility was, therefore, the product of the inherent interaction between the individual and the community bound by identity developed in communion with the past to generate a state for the present in order to convey a message for the future. It bound the person with society within and across time.

The question over responsibility included more than a sense of ownership over acts of the past, it also included an accounting of its associated historical, moral, and social legacies. Dariusz Czaja, Jerzy Jedlicki, and Hanna Świda-Ziemba respectively developed these additional elements within the established framework of collective responsibility.

Dariusz Czaja, an ethnologist, believed that responsibility required an understanding of the application processes that internalized historical legacies into present society. Without this understanding, the impact of historical legacies on the individual and collective structures of identity, society remained incomplete, handicapped by a partial and fragmented memory.⁹³ Denying the reality of Jedwabne

will not make it disappear. It remains in the subconscious, shaping it from the inside. This affects in equal measure the individual subconscious, as well as the collective. To the point, undisclosed bestiality sooner or later leads to the self-poisoning of memory and social consciousness.⁹⁴

Jerzy Jedlicki, a historian, suggested that historical legacy incorporated a transfer of moral values as well. Morals were part of the myths and narratives transferred through culture and tradition. In Jedwabne, that moral culture “made such crimes possible and

⁹² Marek Beylin. “Mówmy: ‘ja’ i ‘my’, a nie ‘oni’.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 2-3 Dec. 2000: 20.

⁹³ Dariusz Czaja. “To nie ‘oni’, niestety.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 16 Dec. 2000: 21.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

helped justify them or pass them over in silence.”⁹⁵ Not only was it important to understand the historical legacy and its internalization, but also the moral legacy that condoned the murder of innocent people.

Finally, Hanna Świda-Ziemba, a sociologist, introduced the notion of the social legacy. This meant an understanding of the development of social attitudes and mechanisms in shaping such communities as Jedwabne, its relation to the Polish nation, as well as its impact on the present. Her particular concern was the role of anti-Semitism. The 1930s, she argued, witnessed new laws restricting Jewish life and an official discourse that advocated Jewish removal. The Polish government sought the acquisition of Madagascar as a colonial possession for the resettlement of the Jewish population. The Second Republic, furthermore, experienced a drastic increase in the number of crimes committed against Jews demonstrating an underlying and growing attitude of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitic attitudes permeated society, and were present in all strata including the Church, the intelligentsia, political parties, government, and the general authority.⁹⁶ Here, Świda-Ziemba drew on the knowledge presented by Ezra Mendelsohn. In the late 1930s, he argued, the Polish government encouraged anti-Semitic violence and attitudes as policy to convince the international community that the only means by which to resolve the Poland’s “Jewish problem” was for it to gain Madagascar as a resettlement zone. The ruling generals, at the time, desired to force the resettlement of approximately 3.5 million Polish-Jewish onto this African island. The idea found no support among the

⁹⁵ Jerzy Jedlicki. “How to deal with this: *Polityka*. 10 Feb. 2001.” *Więź*. April 2001
<<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

⁹⁶ Hanna Świda-Ziemba. “Krótkowzroczność ‘kulturalnych’.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 7-8 Apr. 2001: 18.; “The shortsightedness of the ‘cultured’.” *The Neighbours Respond*. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 103-113.

international community.⁹⁷ Świda-Ziemia did not confine her remarks on the issue of anti-Semitism to the past. Present anti-Semitism in Poland, she argued, continues to be a widespread and deeply rooted phenomenon inherited from this troubled past. The word “Jew”, for example, encompasses everything that is treacherous. It is used as a slur and an insult against other Poles.⁹⁸

...I have seen how anti-Semitism (negative, generalized stereotypes of the Jew) appears in daily life: in uncontrolled, involuntary proclamations and conversations – at the hairdresser’s, while walking the dogs, at the bus stop, on the train, at parties. I believe that such remarks tell us more about social moods than declarations made in surveys.⁹⁹

Understanding this legacy came with a founded knowledge of history, one that perpetually challenged national myths, narratives, and the destructive stereotypes of prejudice, for “prejudice is separated from crime only by a thin layer of ice that can break at any moment. The explosive change for crime is rooted in hateful prejudice.”¹⁰⁰ Collective responsibility, thus, derived from the interactive formation of individual and collective identity bound by the links between the past, present, and future. These links served as conduits for the transfer of culture including historical, moral, and social legacies, for which society bore responsibility.

The model presented a holistic vision of society, thereby accepting responsibility for the Jedwabne killings at both the collective and individual levels including its historical, moral, and social ramifications. The collectivists presented this approach as both moral and progressive, modelled on Western values, rooted in Western democratic tradition of responsibility. They argued its moral worth by identifying myths associated

⁹⁷ Ezra Mendelsohn. *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) 20-21.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 109.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 107.

¹⁰⁰ Hanna Świda-Ziemia. “Krótkowzroczność ‘kulturalnych’.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; “The shortsightedness of the ‘cultured’.” *The Neighbours Respond*. 105.

with righteousness and self-sacrifice as backward, socially destructive, and even criminal. Jedlicki, for example, argued that such moral convictions that maintained Polish righteousness, selflessness, sacrifice, and innocence only led to moral disintegration, a sense of self-deception, and an environment of criminal intent.

Were Poles really capable of throwing infants into the flames? While others watched? Germans, certainly. Lithuanians, of course. Ukrainians – who would expect anything different from them? But Poles? It is far from easy to find out half a century later that no one earned a certificate of collective innocence. This is precisely the basis of infection with hatred and contempt.¹⁰¹

It was time for moral self-reflection, a more balanced perspective that brought the Pole down from the pedestal of saintliness into a real world of Polish fallibility. The reality of Polish morality, argued Jedlicki, was a balance sheet of heroism and baseness, compassion and a lack of mercy.

There is no way one can subtract one from the other or offset one with the other. There will always be two separate ledgers. However, while being happy to preserve the former in our memories, we would rather forget the latter, or consider it marginal in terms of numbers and social significance. But the problem [of Jedwabne] was not marginal and, even if it were, it would still cast a dark shadow over all of Polish life under the occupation.¹⁰²

Collectivist morality considered a balanced approach that weighed the good with the bad, righteousness with inhumanity. It rejected the moral purity of Polish altruism in favour of the fallible, imperfect Pole. The collectivist moral argument included this recognition as part of a larger and longer process of reconciliation. Poles had a further moral obligation to adopt the Jedwabne reality into the national consciousness through an active public policy of reconciliation:

[a] new political and social policy should arise from [Jedwabne], governing even the Church, and opening with a strong symbolic gesture...[this] should be only the beginning of the revision and fundamental transformation of Poles' current views on the "Jewish

¹⁰¹ Jerzy Jedlicki. "How to deal with this: *Polityka*. 10 Feb. 2001." *Więź*.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

problem” in our country. The shock that resulted from the information about Jedwabne should open for us a new chapter in our self-knowledge.¹⁰³

Through recognition and reconciliation, the collectivists redefined Polish moral values as a mature balance between goodness and baseness, as well as a commitment to the collective transformation of society.

The proponents of collective responsibility identified their approach as progressive, modelled upon a perceived notion of what constituted a Western approach. The openness of the Jedwabne debate was itself a sign of democratic progress. The discussion was not about foreign countries, argued Jedlicki, but “about being able at long last to speak openly among ourselves. This is the only way to break free of fears and complexes.”¹⁰⁴ This openness coupled with the new interpretation of Polish moral values would make the country not only a healthier nation with a stronger and more stable collective identity, argued Gebert, but also a part of the Western democratic family, the embodiment of success and responsibility. To prove his point, Gebert used the case of Germany – a country that underwent its own process of collective responsibility over its role in the Second World War and emerged as an exemplary modern model of society.

The acceptance of collective responsibility for those crimes and its transfer to the following generations not only made it possible for the Germans to find reconciliation with the descendants of their victims. It also turned Germany into a state that is profoundly democratic, ruled according to law, and sensitive to wrongdoing.¹⁰⁵

In calling for collective responsibility as a desirable approach representative of progress using Western examples as a model, Gebert employed a value that found resonance in many of the traditional myths: Western belonging. The collectivist approach emphasized

¹⁰³ Hanna Świda-Ziemba. “Krótkowzroczność ‘kulturalnych’.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*; “The shortsightedness of the ‘cultured’.” *The Neighbours Respond*. 112-113.

¹⁰⁴ Jerzy Jedlicki. “How to deal with this: *Polityka*. 10 Feb. 2001.” *Więź*.

¹⁰⁵ Dawid Warszawski. “Odpowiedzialność i jej brak.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*; “Responsibility and the lack of responsibility.” *Więź*.

this particular idea, that Poland was a traditional member of the Western club of nations, chosen to fight on behalf of their freedoms, emulating and epitomizing West European values. Given that Poland had just recently joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (1999) and was on the brink of entry into the European Union (2004), the application of this myth of election carried considerable weight especially among those who had a vested interest in joining the Union, such as Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski.

The collectivists, therefore, did not reject old myths in favour of completely new and foreign concepts. They challenged beliefs of righteousness, purity, and moral infallibility, captured in such myths as the Piast concept and the Christ of Nations, by utilizing those myths found in Polish culture, such as the Jagiellonian and Sarmatian ideas, that advocated tolerance, moral responsibility, and Western belonging. The supporters of collective responsibility modified the concepts, however, redefining them in such a way that made room for the Jedwabne reality in Polish mythology.

The Moralists and Conditionalists – Two Extremes

The moralists and conditionalists represented two ideological extremes of the collectivist group. These groups were not equally proportional, nor did they cater to the same audience. The moralists were a fairly small group dominated, though not exclusively, by the clerical liberal intelligentsia, while the conditionalists comprised a much larger base dominated by historians who helped shape much of the history challenged by Gross.

The Moralists

The secular moralists¹⁰⁶ expanded on the moral aspects of collective responsibility focusing on the process of redemption. The secular moralists accepted the collectivist position, but emphasized its moral component. Instead of challenging Polish altruism, they redefined it as a goal rather than a present state of being by introducing a process to redemption. The three most prominent secular moralists were born prior to the Second World War, and were also renowned political activists: Jan Nowak-Jeziorański (b. 1913), Bohdan Skaradziński (b. 1931), and Jacek Kuroń (b. 1934). Each drew on their own personal experience of the war depicting a Polish-Jewish reality that convinced them of Polish culpability. Nowak-Jeziorański, condemning the action, called for an immediate national symbolic expression of guilt. Skaradziński believed that it was time to settle accounts, to pay penance through compensation and renunciation of anti-Semitism. Finally, Kuroń argued a need for a national complex of guilt. All three arguments decried the Jedwabne killings and called for reconciliation. They accepted collective responsibility as a progressive approach, based on the Western model of reconciliation; however, the moralists appealed to the altruism of Polish values rather than dismissing it as backward and megalomaniac. Framed in mythic religious language of redemption, the group formulated a path that clearly identified the innocent and guilty and laid a course of cleansing and salvation.

Nowak-Jeziorański was one of the first individuals to call for a public apology. He argued that the State and the Church should apologize as the least possible act of

¹⁰⁶ For the religious moralist approach, their interpretation of collective moral responsibility, and their subsequent struggle with the religious conservative-right within the Church community, see Chapter 4.

symbolism demonstrating a sense of collective guilt and atonement for an evil that nothing could justify.

[N]othing can justify the killing of people like animals – the stoning, the butchering with knives, the decapitation, the stabbing with sharpened stakes, the wholesale murder of women and men, of the old and the young herded to the Jewish cemetery, the burying alive of still-breathing victims, the drowning of women with their children in the pond, and, at the end, the forcing of the remaining victims into the barn where they were burned alive.¹⁰⁷

Outraged and disgusted with this behaviour, and the reflection it had upon the collective, he appealed to Polish pride, and Christian values to demonstrate a sense of shame and repentance.

Since we share national pride in our victories, in our laudable actions and in the contributions made by Polish artists to the common treasury of human values, then we must also bring ourselves to feel national shame for shameful actions. As a nation nearly entirely Christian, we must beat our breasts, acknowledging the sins and transgressions of each Polish Cain who violated the commandment “Thou shalt not kill!” If we expect from others redress for crimes committed against Poland and against Poles, we must also demonstrate the will to redress the evil committed by us to our neighbours.¹⁰⁸

Through a public apology with the participation of the State, Church, civil authorities, and Jewish organization as a first step of reconciliation could Polish society “cure the nation of the ethnic or class hatred that led in the past to the most terrible crimes in human history.”¹⁰⁹ For Nowak-Jeziorański, Jedwabne struck at the Polish heart of moral existence. Rather than dismissing the Polish capacity of goodness, he offered a path to redemption. As a first step on the road to righteousness, from which Poles had strayed, society had to adopt collective responsibility, admit its sins, and seek forgiveness. Nowak-Jeziorański heavily utilized concepts of Christian belonging to elicit a challenge to the sincerity of Polish altruism rooted and tied to many of the traditional myths employed in the past: the Bulwark of Christendom, *Polak-Katolik*, the Christ of Nations,

¹⁰⁷ Jan Nowak-Jeziorański. “Potrzeba zadośćuczynienia.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 26 Jan. 2001.; “A need for compensation.” *Więź*. April 2001. <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

and even the puritanism of the Piast ideology. The manner in which he modified the values and traits derived from these myths were to place them as goals rather than states of being. Righteousness existed in the realm of Polish capacity on the condition that society abided by fundamental Christian values of repentance and forgiveness. Righteousness was not a state, an inherent form of being encoded into the Polish nation, but a desire that should inspire Poles to do good and stand in the right.

Skaradziński's experience led him to introduce the notion of penance.

Recollecting Warsaw on the eve of the elimination of the Warsaw Ghetto, he recalled the surge of anti-Semitic fervour in public opinion. He never realised, though, the level of antagonism that existed between Poles and Jews as deep as demonstrated by the events of Jedwabne: "I never dreamt that such a thing could happen in my 'parish,'"¹¹⁰ but it did, and it was clear who committed the crime. The unanswered question, according to Skaradziński, remained the approach to the national response.

There is no doubt that the worst thing is to do nothing. It is the worst thing from a moral point of view, for, when a crime occurs that is not subject to a statute of limitations, there should be a suitable punishment, or at least penance... The devil has made beneath our skins a home for himself no worse than among other nations. Except that this home of his is a peculiar kind of home.¹¹¹

In response to his own experience and that of Jedwabne, Skaradziński introduced the idea of penance as a means to purge the devil from this "peculiar kind of home." The home to which he referred was the guilt in society over Polish actions and attitudes during the war and the subsequent profit many Poles made with the destruction of the Jews. As a form of penance, Skaradziński suggested that people pay compensation for the property they took. "All our senses of repentance would evaporate if people had to pay compensation.

¹¹⁰ Bohdan Skaradziński. "Jedwabne – crime and repentance: *Więź*. February 2001." *Więź*. April 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>; "Zbrodnia i pokuta." *Rzeczpospolita*. 17 Feb. 2001, 9 Sep. 2005 <<http://arch.rzeczpospolita.pl/a/rz/2001/02/20010217/200102170099.html>>.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Then it would be impossible to leave things in the domain of half-sentences and rumours.”¹¹² But the most fundamental form of penance would be “the renunciation by Poles in general of their lamentable attitude towards Judaism and the Jews – in relation to matters past, present, and to come, once and for all and with no ifs, ands, or buts.”¹¹³ It was insufficient for Poles just to seek forgiveness. Society had to be good and do goodness, which meant an active effort to express the guilt and regret for committed wrongs, as well as engage in forms of redress that helped to bridge animosities. In the same manner as Nowak-Jeziorański, Skaradziński catered to Christian moral beliefs of redemption. Rather than considering Polish altruism as an achieved state of being, he presented a process that gave Poles a goal and a hope within the realm of national achievement. If Poles sought forgiveness and followed up with acts of redress, then the nation could feel that it did the right thing out of selfless righteousness.

Kuroń suggested Poland’s process of redemption as one through a complex of guilt. He presented two personal stories that depicted the nature of Polish-Jewish relations during the war. The first occurred in 1943, in the city of Lwów where Kuroń witnessed a couple of Polish youths throwing rocks at the Jews inside the Ghetto. The second story was of his brother Felek who in 1945 went on a walk with his grandfather. Felek began to cry, and a Polish mob roaming the streets accused his grandfather of blood libel.¹¹⁴ The affair ended without an incident but the climate persisted, and a few weeks later, Krakow experienced a pogrom. His point was to illustrate that anti-Semitism in

¹¹² Bohdan Skaradziński. “Jedwabne – crime and repentance: *Więź*. February 2001.” *Więź*; “Zbrodnia i pokuta.” *Rzeczpospolita*.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Blood libel was a common form of an anti-Semitic accusation used to charge Jews for the believed disappearance of Christian children. Christians believed that Jews killed children for their blood in order to make matzah.

Poland during the war was a serious problem as demonstrated by the events of Jedwabne. What evolved during this period and following the war was an internalization of the guilt into a hatred for the victims. To understand the Jewish experience, Poles required a complex of guilt that would allow for them to understand the impact of their actions on the lives of others.¹¹⁵ Kuroń's message was simple. Poles needed to break down their belief in Polish innocence because reality was much different than their chosen perception. Out of the three moralists, Kuroń was the one who least employed religious language or imagery; nevertheless, his position resonated with those of Nowak-Jeziorański and Skaradziński, and elicited values strongly associated with myths of suffering and redemption. Kuroń's suggestion of developing a complex of guilt fit the process to salvation by means of generating collective responsibility and a sense of compassion for the victims rather than the hatred that led to Jedwabne.

Repentance, penance, and guilt became part of a moral process that utilized similar values of suffering and redemption associated with such myths as the Bulwark of Christendom, *Polak-Katolik*, and the Christ of Nations. Instead of presenting the values derived from these myths – values of altruism and righteousness, innocence and purity – as a *fait accompli*, the moralists presented them as a desirable goal and introduced a process to achieve this aim.

The Conditionalists

The conditionalists accepted limited variations of collective responsibility. They premised it primarily on the general historical contextualization of Jedwabne, the various

¹¹⁵ Jan Tomasz Lipski. "Nienawiść do ofiar." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 17-18 Feb. 2001: 23.

forces at play, and influences at work with a focus on external factors rather than internal motivations. This group included a few very prominent World War Two Polish historians who, before Jedwabne, helped shape the nation's historical narrative. Gross's research not only challenged Polish historiography, but also the historians who participated in its creation. Their response was, therefore, defensive – open to considerable reinterpretation yet still keeping to traditional beliefs of Polish, German, Soviet, and Jewish activities during the war. As a result, the conditionalists developed a shared form of culpability assigning degrees of blame to various national actors. This process allowed them to encourage traditional myths of suffering, while simultaneously challenging the very same narratives. The conditionalists challenged myths of Polish heroism and suffering but only to the extent that it did not debase the myth's substance. The approach appeared balanced and responsible, unbiased and critical, considering all sides of each argument; nevertheless, it still fostered a particular vision of Polish identity based on particular values and myths.

Of the conditionalists, the three most prolific were Tomasz Szarota, Paweł Machcewicz, and Zdzisław Kraśnodębski. The first two were historians who also worked for the state Institute of National Remembrance (IPN);¹¹⁶ however, they played an integral role in shaping the conditional elements of collective responsibility within public opinion. Szarota and Machcewicz focused their attention on proving German responsibility and explaining anti-Semitism. The third critic, Kraśnodębski, was a cultural sociologist and philosopher who considered Soviet conditioning and Jewish

¹¹⁶ A State institute created in 1998 by an act of parliament designed to investigate and prosecute crimes against the Polish nation, with a specific focus on Nazi and communist era crimes. Tomasz Szarota's and Paweł Machcewicz's approach is also discussed in the context of the State response to the Jedwabne Affair in the third chapter.

activity as a primary factor on the cultural development of Polish mentality in the Jedwabne region. They agreed with the collectivists that, according to Szarota, “[t]he basic facts seem indisputable. On July 1941, a large group of Poles living in Jedwabne took part in the brutal murder of almost all the local Jews, who in fact made up the clear majority of the inhabitants of the town.”¹¹⁷ For this act, there was no way “to justify the barbarism. The enraged mob committed murder against innocent people.”¹¹⁸

Nevertheless, the conditionalists believed that “[t]o understand this event properly...it is necessary to become familiar with the circumstances of the crime in detail,”¹¹⁹ for , argued Machcewicz, “[a] historian...cannot stop at a moral assessment, but has a duty to sift through even trivial circumstances if these can help in understanding the meaning of events.”¹²⁰ The details upon which Szarota, Machcewicz, and Kraśnodębski premised their assessment assumed a shared responsibility with external national agents, which reinforced elements of Polish World War Two myths though in a sufficiently modified form.

Tomasz Szarota spent most of his analysis questioning Gross’s assessment of German involvement. Over the course of the debate, he became increasingly convinced of German orchestration and participation in Jedwabne. From his first interview that accompanied Żakowski’s article, Szarota criticized Gross for not having explained “the matter of the presence of Germans in Jedwabne and their role in organizing and carrying

¹¹⁷ Jacek Żakowski. “Diabelskie szczegóły.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; “The devil is in the details.” *Więź*.

¹¹⁸ Tomasz Szarota. “Jedwabne without stereotypes: Agnieszka Sabor and Marek Zajac Talk with Professor Tomasz Szarota: *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 28 April 2002.” *The Neighbours Respond*. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 379.

¹¹⁹ Jacek Żakowski. “Diabelskie szczegóły.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; “The devil is in the details.” *Więź*.

¹²⁰ Paweł Machcewicz. “W cieniu Jedwabnego.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 11 Dec. 2000, 9. Sep. 2004 <<http://arch.rzeczpospolita.pl/a/rz/2000/12/20001211/200012110069.html>>; “In the shadow of Jedwabne.” *Więź*. 2001. <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

out the pogrom.”¹²¹ Within this article, he raised other issues including those of Jewish collaboration, the Soviet occupation, and anti-Semitism – which he identified as “the basis for what happened. But not only.”¹²² His subsequent articles, however, dealt dominantly with German involvement and, implicitly, the degree of their responsibility. In his December essay, Szarota analyzed the activities of two German police battalions in the region, as well as the presence of Wolfgang Birkner, a high-ranking German officer responsible in some measure for the Białystok district. Szarota concluded that

the events in Jedwabne should be listed among the well-organized operations of the Nazi *Einsatzgruppen*, *Einsatzkommandos*, and *Sonderkommandos* referred to in the relevant orders as *Selbstreinigungskaktionen*, or “self-purification operations.” In short, the idea was to provoke anti-Jewish pogroms in the occupied territory in the East “without leaving any traces” of German involvement.¹²³

Similarly in a *Więź* article,¹²⁴ a Catholic intellectual monthly review, he noted that

Jedwabne was one of the so-called self-cleansing actions conducted at the time, inspired by the Germans, directed by the Germans, and with the assurance of immunity for the participants in the pogrom. But the pogrom itself was carried out at the hands of the local population – in this case Poles. Such activities had a propagandistic character: they were supposed to prove that hatred of the Jews was universal. The German units of the Special Polish and the Security Services (*Einsatzgruppen* and *Einsatzkommandos*) were given an order in 1941 to organize such “self-cleansing actions,” leaving no trace of their own role and participation. So it is no surprise that there is little in the German source materials that implicates the Germans.¹²⁵

Szarota’s attempt to establish German co-responsibility reinforced ideas of Polish victimhood and suffering. He recognized Polish perpetration, and challenged beliefs in Polish innocence and righteousness; however, he only challenged those beliefs to the extent that it continued to conform to notions of general suffering. Poles committed

¹²¹ Jacek Żakowski. “Diabelskie szczegóły.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; “The devil is in the details.” *Więź*.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Tomasz Szarota. “Czy na pewno już wszystko wiemy.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 2-3 Dec. 2000.; “Do we now know everything for certain?” *Więź*. April 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

¹²⁴ Tomasz Szarota. “The national debate on jedwabne: reflections of a historian and specialist on national stereotypes.” *Więź*. April 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

¹²⁵ Tomasz Szarota. “Jedwabne without stereotypes: Agnieszka Sabor and Marek Zajac talk with Professor Tomasz Szarota: *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 28 April 2002.” *The Neighbours Respond*. 375-376.

atrocities during the war, but they were overall victims of an organized German campaign to liquidate the world of its Jewry. By reinforcing victimhood, he perpetuated the stereotype of Poles as pawns of Nazi policy. As a “specialist on national stereotypes,”¹²⁶ Szarota surprisingly applied many stereotypes himself in creating his own myth of shared responsibility.

Paweł Machcewicz, too, applied similar values and myths in developing his version of Polish culpability. He identified several potential motives for the Jedwabne killings: anti-Semitism, greed, Jewish collaboration, the personal loss of a sister of the Laudanski¹²⁷ brothers to the NKVD, and the release of anti-Soviet prisoners by German forces. His single main concern, though, was Gross’s assertion of Polish apathy to the Jewish plight. Unlike Szarota, he did not directly address the issue of Jedwabne, but it was part of an overall theme to present a victimized Pole while acknowledging immediate Polish responsibility for the killings.

Machcewicz agreed with Gross that Poles exhibited considerable apathy toward the Jews, with isolated cases of *szmalcownictwo*, blackmailing, and “cases where Polish peasants captured Jews who were in hiding,”¹²⁸ but only in principle. In his interpretation,

considering Germany’s policy of extermination *vis-à-vis* the Poles, the very idea that widespread help for the Jews would have kept the hands of the Gestapo tied and would have protected the Jews against repression seems to be a piece of historical science fiction...harbouring Jews put the entire Polish family under threat of death, and the most that can be expected of people is a sense of decency, but not heroism.¹²⁹

Machcewicz targeted his response at Gross’s assessment of blame, but the overall effect was to reinforce Polish paralysis in light of an oppressive regime as an explanation of the

¹²⁶ Tomasz Szarota. “The national debate on jedwabne: reflections of a historian and specialist on national stereotypes.” *Więź*.

¹²⁷ Two of the three Laudanski brothers living in Jedwabne on July 10, 1941, actively participated in the killings of the town’s Jewry.

¹²⁸ Paweł Machcewicz. “W cieniu Jedwabnego.” *Rzeczpospolita*.; “In the shadow of Jedwabne.” *Więź*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

charge of apathy. In contextualizing Jedwabne, Polish victimhood had to be considered within the general analysis. Neither Szarota nor Machcewicz equated the Jewish and Polish experiences of suffering by the German forces, but through German responsibility, they continued to reinforce the mythic belief of Polish victimhood.

Similar to the collectivists and moralists, Szarota and Machcewicz recognized the problem of anti-Semitism in Poland. Both considered anti-Semitism at the base of the problem: “[o]ne of the motives was certainly anti-Semitism.”¹³⁰ Unlike the collectivists, however, Szarota mitigated the levels of anti-Semitism to the periphery of the radical nationalist right, while exalting the State apparatus and its efforts to suppress the right.

[T]he Province of Łomża was an area of significant influence of the National Democracy movement and the very radical youth wings allied with it. When we think about the late thirties in Poland, there are associations with the increasing wave of anti-Semitism, “ghetto benches” at educational institutions, and anti-Jewish excesses. Reflections that the Second Polish Republic was a nation of laws, actively opposed to the activities of the extreme right wing, are much less prominent. In the effort to ensure order, there was an effort to suppress anti-Jewish incidents, and to bring agitators who exacerbated nationalistic tensions, including Catholic priests, to justice... We surely forget too often that the *Sanacja* governments in Poland were considered by nationalist groups to be centres of Jewish and Masonic influence and obstacles to the process of creating a Catholic Polish “national state.” In the view of the nationalists, these were not governments capable of carrying out the slogan “Jews to Madagascar.” It was the German occupation regime that suddenly created an opportunity to eliminate the “foreign element.”¹³¹

As with his approach to Polish responsibility, Szarota balanced his description of anti-Semitism. He presented the early twentieth century as a conflict between the Piast concept (embodied by the National Democrats) and the Jagiellonian concept (the guiding principle of the *Sanacja* regime). Though it appeared balanced, he placed emphasis on the government’s ideology as the dominant mentality by isolating anti-Semitism to the right-wing elements of society. In this example, Szarota promoted the image of a

¹³⁰ Paweł Machcewicz. “W cieniu Jedwabnego.” *Rzeczpospolita*.; “In the shadow of Jedwabne.” *Więź*.

¹³¹ Tomasz Szarota. “The national debate on jedwabne: reflections of a historian and specialist on national stereotypes.” *Więź*.

majority population characterized by tolerance, respect, and multiculturalism, while Jedwabne and its associated National Democratic leaning as backward and undesirable. He, thereby, isolated Jedwabne to a localized region, and removed it from the normalcy of the majority. Poland remained responsible for the perpetrators, but the event could not be applied to Polish society as a whole. Szarota's and Machcewicz's strategies, regardless of their apparent "balanced" approach, still employed myths, values, and beliefs to form their own particular vision of identity.

Kraśnodębski's approach mirrored those of the others, but addressed the issue of Soviet occupation. The question that dominated his mind was "[i]n whose name? This question appears to me to be rather important in deliberations on the theme of responsibility."¹³²

Gross's book reminds us of the need to redress this responsibility, and of the obligations that flow from the deeds of our fathers and grandfathers. After the things that happened, we have a particular moral and political responsibility to our compatriots of Jewish origin, to Polish Jews and Jews in general.¹³³

Kraśnodębski, however, considered the cultural development and conditioning under Soviet occupation as a crucial factor in attributing responsibility. In raising a series of questions, he suggested that perhaps Jewish communism, *żydokomuna*, had some buried truth. The division between Poles and Jews "could probably only have occurred because the Jews, weakly integrated with the Poles, reacted in a different way to the Soviet occupation, treating it simply as still another change of state allegiance, and rather quickly adapted to the situation."¹³⁴ Kraśnodębski did not state that Jews were communist sympathizers. Rather, he challenged the knowledge on Jewish attitudes in the region.

¹³² Zdzisław Kraśnodębski. "In darkest Jedwabne: *Znak*. February 2001." *Więź*. April 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

Jews might have been more favourable to the Soviet regime, might have even welcomed it as an alternative safer order to that of the Third Reich.¹³⁵ Thus, he incorporated the Soviets and Jews into the calculation of national responsibilities encouraging the myths of Jewish collaboration and *żydokomuna*. Kraśnodębski utilized the myth of suffering presenting a Pole victimized by both the Soviet regime and pro-Soviet Jewish sympathizers and collaborators. He modified these myths against a backdrop of Polish perpetration with the intention to argue shared responsibility; nevertheless, he employed the narratives to balance myth and reality in a manner that maintained core values of victimhood and suffering.

The Reactionaries and Reactionaries

The reactionaries applied a similar approach to that of the conditionalists, but premised it on one fundamental difference. The reactionaries accepted individual Polish perpetration though rejected the applicability of responsibility upon the entire nation. Instead, they upheld traditional Polish myths and used individual responsibility as one of many tools to shift blame from the Polish nation. Among this group were equally some prominent Polish historians who had previously participated in creating a historical narrative that encouraged Polish victimization. The most pronounced included Tomasz Strzembosz, Bogdan Musiał, and Thomas Urban. By demonstrating the primary impact of external factors and the responsibility of other nations, they minimized the applicability of Polish collective culpability because it did not conform to their version of history. They focused specifically on the conditions under the Soviet occupation, the role

¹³⁵ Zdzisław Kraśnodębski. "In darkest Jedwabne: *Znak*. February 2001." *Więź*.

of the “Holocaust Industry”,¹³⁶ levels of anti-Semitism, and German involvement. In each example, Strzembosz, Musiał, and Urban upheld unaltered and unchallenged myths of suffering and victimhood.

Strzembosz presented the Jedwabne Poles as victims of Soviet occupation during which Jews participated and collaborated with the authorities at the detriment of the Polish population. From 1939 to 1941, Poles under Soviet jurisdiction were subject to a system of terror orchestrated by the NKVD and various militia groups. Together, they organized and facilitated a series of mass deportations of Poles into Siberia, which affected each Polish family. The Jews, he argued,

were not deported to Siberia, they were not shot or sent to concentration camps, they were not killed through starvation and hard labour. If they did not regard Poland as their homeland, they did not have to treat it as an occupation regime and join its mortal enemy in killing Polish soldiers and murdering Polish civilians fleeing to the east. They also did not have to take part in fingering their neighbours for deportations.¹³⁷

The Soviet occupation specifically and exclusively targeted the Polish population, whereas the Soviets left the Jews unscathed. The Jews, instead, betrayed Poles by cooperating with the occupiers. Thus, Strzembosz considered Jedwabne as a genuine national struggle between Poles and Jews more than Poles and Soviets or Poles and Germans. It was a settling of real accounts. What Gross identified as stereotypes, Strzembosz maintained as reality and not perception: “[T]he Jewish population, especially youths and the town-dwelling poor, staged a mass welcome for the invading

¹³⁶ The “Holocaust Industry” is a phrase coined by Norman G. Finkelstein who argues that an “industry” has exploited the memory of the Holocaust to further Jewish and Israeli interests. This industry has also corrupted Jewish culture and heritage. In the Polish use of the term, it is used to denote Jewish control of the media, American history, and public opinion. The aim of this industry is to tarnish the name of other nations as Holocaust collaborators in order to seek financial restitution.

¹³⁷ Tomasz Szarota. “Przemilczana kolaboracja.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 27 Jan. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <<http://arch.rzeczpospolita.pl/a/rz/2001/01/20010127/200101270098.html>>. ; “Covered-up collaboration.” *Więź*. April 2001 <<http://wicz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

army and took part in introducing the new order, some with weapons in hand,”¹³⁸ “Jews launched acts of rebellion against the Polish state by occupying localities, setting up revolutionary committees there, arresting and executing representatives of Polish state authorities, and attacking smaller and even quite large units of the Polish Army,”¹³⁹ and “for Polish society the most glaring thing was the large number of Jews in all Soviet public offices and institutions.”¹⁴⁰ Strzembosz’s adamant focus on Jewish activities during the war legitimized Polish perceptions of Jewish collaboration, betrayal, and *żydokomuna*. It also legitimized Polish actions as a victimized self-defence mechanism against an exterior or foreign threat presented by the Jews. Not only did he reinforce established myths, he considered them fundamentally true. Jedwabne was, therefore, another struggle of Polish suffering.

Musiał dedicated much of his response to two issues: the Holocaust Industry and anti-Semitism. He integrated these two concepts in a manner that evoked the values of continued Polish suffering. Musiał argued that the belief of widespread anti-Semitism in Poland was part of a well-organized Holocaust lobby led by American Jews. He did not reject the presence of anti-Semitism; nevertheless, “[i]t is absolutely certain that Poles are not anti-Semites by nature. This is an absurd thesis.”¹⁴¹ He criticized the spread of this stereotype “by people such as Claude Lanzmann or Elie Wiesel, people who are great opinion makers, as are newspapers like the *New York Times*. This assessment of history is an exact inversion of the anti-Semitic stereotype. This is anti-Polish chauvinism.”¹⁴² In

¹³⁸ Tomasz Szarota. “Przemilczana kolaboracja.” *Rzeczpospolita*.; “Covered-up collaboration.” *Więź*.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Paweł Paliwoda. “We cannot be afraid: Bogdan Musiał interviewed by Paweł Paliwoda: *Zycie*. 2 February 2001.” *Więź*. April 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

this manner, Musiał linked anti-Semitism in Poland as a fabricated product of the Holocaust Industry presenting the Polish nation as a victim of an orchestrated attack to rob it of its history and limited wealth. In a subsequent article, he elaborated on this thesis presenting an American society dominated by Jews who “for years played an important role in Hollywood, television, press and publication, in other words, areas of public opinion creation.”¹⁴³ These people commercialized the Holocaust, began legal processes for inheritance restitution and compensation, and made an academic business out of it as well. In so doing, Musiał argued, “for the ethnic Polish victims of the Second World War (approximately 1.5 million), there was no room... Instead, there is room for the homosexual victims of Nazism whose numbers reached no more than 10 000.”¹⁴⁴ This approach perpetuated a very strong belief in a continued persecution of the Polish nation especially at the hands of the Jews. Except this time, the struggle was over image and public opinion and not economic and political power. Musiał simply reinforced ruling values by shifting responsibility onto external factors presenting Poland as an everlasting victim of foreign oppression.

Thomas Urban focused his attention on reinforcing German responsibility. Basing his arguments on a report that identified a German man called Hermann Schaper, Urban argued that a small group of select individuals perpetrated the act but under influence, orchestration, and direction of the German forces, in particular Einsatzkomando Schaper. He recognized individual Poles as having done the killings but as forced and unwilling servants, pawns of a greater German war machine. Einsatzkomandos, he argued, were known throughout Eastern Europe, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. They recruited the

¹⁴³ Bogdan Musiał. “Historiografia mityczna.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 24 Feb. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004
<<http://arch.rzeczpospolita.pl/a/rz/2001/02/20010224/200102240122.html>>.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

dregs of society and played on their traditional anti-Semitism to provoke and insight hatred toward the Jews. Schaper was such a man, and Jedwanbe fell under his command.¹⁴⁵ Urban used this report, and Schaper's biography, to establish the missing link between Jedwabne and German participation. He, therefore, concluded that Poles were simple pawns of a predetermined Nazi policy: "the Germans thought-up, organized, and staged this murder and ultimately used their weapons to commit the act."¹⁴⁶ Urban did not challenge or change this myth, but kept to the traditional script. The collective remained absolved of the crime, and the individual perpetrator also became a victim.

The reactionaries maintained collective innocence through victimhood. By focusing on the Soviets, Jews, and Germans, they reinforced old myths of World War Two and employed values that presented the suffering Pole, the Christ of Nations. Strzembosz, Musiał, and Urban recognized that Poles had committed the crime, and thus, they did not advocate Polish righteousness. Yet their defence of key myths reflected a strong aversion in accepting a new reality that challenged their notion of history. Jedwabne was an anomaly to their otherwise fairly cohesive interpretation of Polish identity.

The rejectionists, though not represented in the mainstream press, still comprised a formidable presence. They dominated much of the local Catholic-nationalist and populist dailies, and found support among rural, village, and small town communities. Much of their conceptual communication took the form of meetings in churches, town halls, and lecture halls, hence the difficulty in gaining a better understanding of this particular approach. In essence, however, their overall approach did not differ much from

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Urban. "Poszukiwany Hermann Schaper." *Rzeczpospolita*. 1 Sep. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004
<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010901/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_1.html>.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the reactionaries except that they completely rejected Polish perpetration. According to a preliminary typology of public opinion of the Jedwabne Affair, the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) historian Andrzej Paczkowski, identified the rejectionists as a group who used the arguments that exonerated Poles as absolute truths. They focused on the negative relations and attitudes between Poles and Jews, and believed firmly in an anti-Polish campaign.¹⁴⁷ They held steadfast to those myths of innocence, righteousness, and victimhood with absolute conviction of their truth. There was no room for fallibility in this vision of Polish identity.

Neighbours had a considerable impact on Polish identity. It challenged many national myths that had evolved over the course of Polish history. Though the Sarmatian myth, the Bulwark of Christendom, and the Christ of Nations, for example, are no longer referred to by name, many of the values they helped to create persisted into contemporary society and were commonly employed during the course of the Jedwabne controversy. The discourse over Jedwabne demonstrated the continued relevance of such values as victimhood, suffering, altruism, purity, and progress. Public opinion utilized these various values and traits in different combinations generating several approaches to responsibility based on competing visions of identity. The approach to responsibility exemplified these divisions. The individualists, for example, opted to define their own level of responsibility. The collectivists believed that responsibility applied to the nation because of the bonds that bound individuals and collectivities in the present and across time. Responsibility, though, was more than just recognition of blame. It included an

¹⁴⁷ Andrzej Paczkowski. "Debate wokół 'Sąsiadów': próba wstępnej typologii." *Rzeczpospolita*. 24 Mar. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 < http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/dodatki/plus_minus_010324/plus_minus_a_9.html>.

understanding of the historical, moral, and social legacies that permitted such outbreaks of inhumanity as witnessed in Jedwabne. Based on this recognition and understanding, as members of Western civilization, responsibility also required reconciliation. The moralists offered a process of redemption that redefined Polish altruism as a goal and not a state. For them, there was no choice or condition or degree of culpability. The conditionalists, however, disagreed believing that the responsible course was to weigh both sides of the argument. They presented Polish perpetration as a collective fact, but conditioned it upon the Polish overall experience of victimhood. The reactionaries applied a similar tactic as the conditionalists using historical circumstance as a means to illustrate their point; however, they rejected the applicability of collective responsibility and maintained traditional Polish mythology. Finally, the rejectionists forwarded an image that epitomized Polish victimhood, innocence, and pure righteousness.

Gross's critique shocked the nation and revealed the gap between Polish history immersed in mythology and a cognitive knowledge of reality. Consequently, each form of public response and approach sought to re-establish a sense of coherence and cohesion back into Polish identity. The process divided the nation and contributed to an emerging social and political polarity splitting the country between the left and the right. This schism became increasingly evident across the span of the Jedwabne controversy in particular within the State and Church responses.

Chapter 2

The State Response

Alas! it is a fearful thing
To feel another's guilt!
- Oscar Wilde (*The Ballad of Reading Gaol*)

It is quite gratifying to feel guilty if you haven't done anything wrong:
how noble! Whereas it is rather hard and certainly depressing to admit
guilt and to repent.
- Hannah Arendt (*Eichmann in Jerusalem*)

[T]oday, as a citizen and as the president of the Polish Republic, I apologize. I apologize in the name of all those Poles whose conscience is moved by that crime. In the name of those who believe that we cannot be proud of the magnificence of Polish history without at the same time feeling pain and shame for the wrongs that Poles have done to others.¹⁴⁸

These words, spoken by Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski at the 60th commemorative anniversary of the Jedwabne killings, marked the zenith of a debate that dominated the media for approximately a year. Out of an expected 5000 people, only a few hundred came to pay their respects. Those in attendance represented certain circles of the intelligentsia, state officials, family members of the survivors, and crews of journalists from around the world. However, the majority expected to attend – the Polish public – remained absent. For an event that represented the culmination of a nation's struggle over its own identity, very few Poles chose to attend such a monumental ceremony reflecting an increasing polarity within society.

The State played a significant role in shaping the response to the 60th anniversary. From September 2000 to July 2001, six major events emerged over the Jedwabne issue. The official investigation, the Presidential apology, the Government's international

¹⁴⁸ Andrzej Kaczyński and Zbigniew Lentowicz. "Kadisz w Jedwabnem." *Rzeczpospolita*. 11 July 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 < http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010711/kraj/kraj_a_1.html>; "Sąsiedzi sąsiadom agotowali ten los." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 July 2001: 4.; "Address by President of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski at the Ceremonies in Jedwabne Marking the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Jedwabne Tragedy on 10 July 2001." *The Neighbours Respond*. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 131-132.

campaign, the memorial, the exhumation, and finally, the 60th commemorative anniversary demonstrated both the internal divisions within the State apparatus and the views accepted, represented, and advocated by each State actor. Over the course of these issues, the President symbolized the collectivist, moralist, and conditionalist approach, while the Prime Minister catered to the individualists and reactionaries. Though somewhat chaotic at first, by the 60th anniversary, the State response had successfully split the nation into two distinct visions of identity.

The Investigation

An official investigation, conducted by the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), was an example where the views of different individuals mirrored the struggle over memory in the interpretation of Polish history and the assignment of responsibility.

Created on December 18, 1998 to replace the Chief Commission for the Examination of Crimes against the Polish Nation,¹⁴⁹ the IPN was predominantly responsible for the research, investigation, and prosecution of Nazi and communist era crimes.¹⁵⁰ This objective reflected a common trend throughout former Eastern bloc countries in dealing with their historical legacies. In the mid 1990s, several former bloc countries under anti-communist regimes launched variations of lustration initiatives to purge their respective systems of communist remnants. In Poland, the political right – a loose coalition of offshoot parties and organizations from the Solidarity movement of the 1980s characterized by hostility toward the former communist establishment – actively

¹⁴⁹ The Chief Commission for the Examination of Crimes was created on April 4, 1991.

¹⁵⁰ Chapter 1: General Provisions, Article 1.1. Act of 18 December 1998 on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation. *Journal of Laws* 19 Dec. 1998, 8 Nov. 2005 <http://www.ipn.gov.pl/index_eng.html>.

pushed for and supported the creation of the IPN as a body to facilitate this lustration process. In this context, the IPN was to serve the interests of the anti-communist establishment. Instead, its first task involved an investigation into crimes committed by Poles against the Jews – a far different project than that envisaged by the political right.

In the summer of 2000, shortly after the publication of Jan Tomasz Gross's book, *Neighbours*, the Polish Government instructed IPN president Leon Kieres to begin an official criminal and historical investigation into the events of July 10, 1941 in the town of Jedwabne. All of the IPN investigators agreed that Poles perpetrated the act of killing the Jedwabne Jews; however, they were divided on the motivations that inspired the killings, which became their measurement of responsibility, premised on historical circumstance. Thus, they measured Polish collective responsibility based on the conditions set by history.

The criminal investigation, though bound by principles of impartiality, was not immune to tensions between mythology and history. Polish myths attributed most of World War Two crimes to the Germans or Soviets, but the evidence of Jedwabne demonstrated a very different reality. Chief prosecutor Radoslaw Ignatiew operated within this context. Based on his interpretation of events, he helped to create a new story that accommodated existing mythology with an unfamiliar or new history. He attributed active responsibility to the participants, denied passive responsibility to the bystanders, and reinforced an ideological responsibility to the Germans.

Ignatiew confirmed the participation of approximately forty Poles in the killings.¹⁵¹ According to the law, these participants were legally responsible; however, because of insufficient evidence, the prosecutor decided not to lay any new charges against individuals who had not been charged and tried in the 1940s.¹⁵² He, furthermore, placed their responsibility in the confines of the historical past; thus, outside and beyond the reach of present and future legal mechanisms. As a result, the perpetrators acquired full legal immunity. Of the bystanders, Ignatiew concluded their passivity incompatible with Polish law. Passivity could not be qualified under criminal law and could not be “evaluated in terms of ascribing responsibility.”¹⁵³ Therefore, Polish culpability in its entirety remained limited, isolated to the Polish individuals who actively participated in the killings to the extent that their responsibility remained exclusively part of the past. Criminal law did, however, have the capacity and jurisdiction to attribute ideological blame. Though the investigators found little evidence to suggest active German participation,¹⁵⁴ the very presence of German forces was sufficient to serve as an ideological inspiration for the crime. “[I]t should be stated that, in terms of criminal law, it is justifiable to ascribe responsibility *sensu largo* for that crime to the Germans.”¹⁵⁵ The Nazi war machine, characterized by its fascist and racist ideology, bore culpability for the actions it inspired among local populations. The prosecutor furthered a limited Polish responsibility by associating the intent of the crime with the German nation; thus, in accordance with traditional Polish myth, Ignatiew perpetuated the national belief in

¹⁵¹ Elżbieta Południk and Andrzej Kaczyński. “Jednak Sąsiedzi.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 10 July 2002, 9 Sep. 2004

<<http://arch.rzeczpospolita.pl/a/rz/2002/07/20020710/200207100037.html?k=on&t=2002060120020723>>.

¹⁵² Urszula Arter. “Mordowali Sąsiedzi.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 10 July 2002: 1.

¹⁵³ Elżbieta Południk and Andrzej Kaczyński. “Jednak Sąsiedzi.” *Rzeczpospolita*.

¹⁵⁴ Urszula Arter. “Mordowali Sąsiedzi.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

¹⁵⁵ Elżbieta Południk and Andrzej Kaczyński. “Jednak Sąsiedzi.” *Rzeczpospolita*.

German blame. His conclusions reflected an attempt to balance prevailing myths with emerging histories. Germans remained ideologically at fault, though a limited number of Poles committed the crime.

The challenge to unravel myth from history extended as well to the historical investigation. The IPN historians, an assembly of Polish experts from different areas of World War Two history, struggled to identify the socio-historical factors that contributed to the criminal motivations. They presented competing interpretations ascribing responsibility to different causes. Some of the historians framed their interpretations in a manner that continued to emphasize German culpability. Others argued that Poles were largely to blame. The investigation identified several key areas of interest of which two emerged as the most salient and controversial: German participation and Jewish cooperation with the Soviet forces. These questions sparked the most significant divisions visible among the historians, especially among Paweł Machcewicz, Tomasz Szarota, and Andrzej Żbikowski. Paweł Machcewicz¹⁵⁶ and Tomasz Szarota¹⁵⁷ struggled to create a new myth that incorporated a shared responsibility between Poles, Germans, and Jews; whereas, Andrzej Żbikowski¹⁵⁸ argued that Poles voluntarily committed the killings by cooperating with the Germans and, thus, bore the brunt of the blame.

Paweł Machcewicz was not averse to limited Polish responsibility, nor did he question Polish involvement in the killings: “These facts are questioned by virtually no one, but there are doubts as to the role of the Germans.”¹⁵⁹ His principal issue was that of

¹⁵⁶ Paweł Machcewicz was the director of the historical investigation.

¹⁵⁷ Tomasz Szarota is an expert historian in World War Two history and the German occupation.

¹⁵⁸ Andrzej Żbikowski is a historian for the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH) – Żydowski Instytut Historyczny.

¹⁵⁹ Paweł Machcewicz. “W cieniu Jedwabnego.” *Rzeczpospolita*.; “In the shadow of Jedwabne.” *Więź*.

developing a more thorough understanding of German participation, for historically, the entire region was under German and not Polish control.

Various reports contain conflicting information about the presence of Germans in Jedwabne. One of those interrogated says that there were 60 Germans there. Others also mention that the Germans helped or even drove the Poles onto the town square to make them carry out the atrocity. I think this issue must be clarified.¹⁶⁰

Germans actively orchestrated and participated in the extermination of Jews in the area.

“In order to contextualize the events of Jedwabne, one must remember that several days earlier, two German police battalions murdered two thousand Białystok Jews of which many were burned alive in the synagogue.”¹⁶¹ This was only one example of numerous and similar events organized by the Nazis, so to dismiss German participation was to simplify Polish-Jewish relations.¹⁶² Jedwabne, he suggested, could not be attributed to the nation as a whole, because it stemmed from a complex interaction of events and influences and not just a simple hatred of Jews. Polish responsibility was, thus, limited, conditional on a better clarification of German involvement. Poles were no doubt to blame for the perpetration of the killings, but Machcewicz framed this culpability in a shared context convinced of some German and even Jewish participation.

Jews, Machcewicz argued, cooperated with the NKVD as informants on Polish insurgent activities fostering feelings of betrayal and disloyalty among the Polish population. Out of personal revenge, those Poles affected by Jewish cooperation with the

¹⁶⁰ “Jedwabne, 10 lipca 1941 – zbrodnia i pamięć.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 3 Mar. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010303/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_1.html>; “Jedwabne – crime and memory.” *Więź*. April 2001 <<http://wicz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

¹⁶¹ Paweł Machcewicz. “W cieniu Jedwabnego.” *Rzeczpospolita*.; “In the shadow of Jedwabne.” *Więź*.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

Soviet services sought their vengeance under German occupation.¹⁶³ This was a real problem.¹⁶⁴

[T]he Jews were the most visible group collaborating with the Soviets and the NKVD. An examination of the very events of July 10 shows that elements of vengeance existed there. The Jews were forced to dismantle Lenin's statue, carry the red flag, sing "This war was through us," etc. So the problem seems to exist.¹⁶⁵

The Jewish role, the Jewish part of responsibility, laid in their cooperation with the Soviet authority breeding antagonistic feelings. Polish actions in Jedwabne proceeded from sentiments of hatred and vengeance inspired by Jewish activities and not from a historical aggravated trend of anti-Semitism. This rationale reflected dominant stereotypes in Polish myth wherein the narrative held Jews as disloyal and traitors, cooperators with the oppressors. The combination of these two particular myths, German orchestration and Jewish cooperation including an acceptance of Polish perpetration, subscribed to elements of existing myth while simultaneously incorporating the Jedwabne reality. The effect was a shared concept of responsibility between Poles, Germans, and Jews.

Tomasz Szarota adopted a similar approach. He recognized Polish perpetration, placed emphasis on German participation, and apportioned responsibility for Jewish cooperation to the Soviet system. Szarota accepted Polish myth but modified it in a manner to share the burden of responsibility. Like Machcewicz, Polish perpetration was a given fact based on evidence. There was no room to dispute this historical reality; however, the role of the Nazis remained integral in understanding Polish actions. Convinced of German participation, he pressed to illustrate the power of their influence

¹⁶³ Paweł Machcewicz. "W cieniu Jedwabnego." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "In the shadow of Jedwabne." *Więź*.

¹⁶⁴ "Jedwabne, 10 lipca 1941 – zbrodnia i pamięć." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "Jedwabne – crime and memory." *Więź*.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

on the local population. In his first article¹⁶⁶ on the subject, Szarota raised concerns over the lack of a better analysis of the “presence of Germans in Jedwabne and their role in organizing and carrying out the pogrom.”¹⁶⁷ He cited several testimonial examples of German presence in the region from Wolfgang Birkner of the Warsaw Gestapo, the German police Battalions 309 and 316, to the 232 Nazi police soldiers under Birkner’s direct command.¹⁶⁸ Jedwabne was a product of a well-orchestrated plan designed to eliminate the Jewish population.¹⁶⁹ Nazi involvement, however, was not the only factor to influence Polish mentality. Jews also played a role, Szarota argued, but as pawns of a Soviet system.

Szarota presented the source to “the outbreak of hatred of the Jews that occurred after the arrival of the Germans...in generalized observations of the [cooperative] behaviour of some Jews under Soviet occupation.”¹⁷⁰ Unlike Machcewicz, Szarota argued that Jewish cooperation was a product of the Soviet system – a system with an intricate structure of incentives that encouraged cooperative behaviour. “Soviet totalitarianism [thereby] brought about new wrongs to be settled.”¹⁷¹ Jewish cooperation was a Soviet invention that encouraged and stimulated the social deprivation of Polish moral sensitivity.¹⁷² The combination bred the events that transpired in Jedwabne. Thus, responsibility weighed also upon the Soviet administration, their policies, and their destructive form of conditioning.

¹⁶⁶ Jacek Żakowski. “Diabelskie szczegóły.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; “The devil is in the details.” *Więź*.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Tomasz Szarota. “Czy na pewno już wszystko wiemy.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; “Do we now know everything for certain?” *Więź*.

¹⁷⁰ Jacek Żakowski. “Diabelskie szczegóły.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; “The devil is in the details.” *Więź*.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Machcewicz and Szarota used similar existing myths, German responsibility and Jewish cooperation, but they did this in the context of Polish perpetration. Consequently, their attempts to combine mythology with history created a new mythological narrative that apportioned responsibility across several actors. The Jews sowed the seed of hatred; German ideology and dogma inspired the killings; and the Poles committed the act.

Andrzej Żbikowski employed myth and history in a similar way but in a different form. The underlying principle remained the same – the use of history to modify or change myth. This narrative focused on the extent of Polish cooperation with the Nazi German forces. Żbikowski argued that Polish activities were far more pervasive than previously believed, and that Jewish cooperation was commonly exaggerated for ulterior motives. Rather than modifying existing notions of German responsibility and Jewish cooperation, he used Polish perpetration as the basis for a very distinct narrative and story. This new storyline placed Polish responsibility at the centre instead of allocating it across a myriad of actors.

According to numerous accounts by Jewish survivors deposited in the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH), Polish cooperation with German authorities was a common occurrence. Many local Poles, argued Żbikowski, together with the Germans beat and stole from the Jews. Within a couple of months of the Nazi invasion of 1941, Polish residents and leaders routinely wrote to the German authority based in Łomża requesting the deportation of Jews from cities and towns.¹⁷³ In Stawiskach, for example, on June 27, 1941, a series of murders began ““conducted without intervention during the

¹⁷³ Andrzej Żbikowski. “Nie było rozkazu.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 4 Jan. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <<http://arch.rzeczpospolita.pl/a/rz/2001/01/20010104/200101040050.html>>.

light of day by Polish bands, often directed by intelligent people.”¹⁷⁴ Fifty such recorded incidences occurred in the region, where Poles beat and killed the Jews, concomitantly stealing their possessions using Jewish cooperation as a pre-text for Polish actions and behaviour.¹⁷⁵ “All the killers used popular opinion of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets solely as a pretext for theft and murder with impunity.”¹⁷⁶

Żbikowski addressed German responsibility and Jewish cooperation by reformulating their fundamental assertion of Polish innocence. In both cases, he placed Polish responsibility at the epicentre introducing a new myth around Polish culpability rather than German, Soviet, or Jewish.

In unravelling the motivations that led to the Jedwabne killings, the IPN historians found themselves struggling to accommodate myth and history. Their disparate historical interpretations, and their varied assignments of responsibility reflected the complex, layered, and multi-faceted effect of the Jedwabne Affair and its impact on Polish identity. Machcewicz and Szarota, convinced of German participation, spread responsibility across Germans, Jews, and Poles. Żbikowski focused on Polish intentions, and consequently, placed responsibility on Polish behaviour of greed and jealousy. Be it through a drive to integrate the two by Machcewicz and Szarota, or through reformulating its essential premise by Żbikowski, myth and history were deeply intertwined feeding from one into the other.

It is important to note that anti-Semitism was not an issue of analytical focus within the official investigation. Machcewicz, Szarota, and Żbikowski alluded to its

¹⁷⁴ Andrzej Żbikowski. “Nie było rozkazu.” *Rzeczpospolita*.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

existence and offered it as a potential explanatory factor of the motivations, but none examined the problem in greater historical and sociological detail. This historically significant element remained outside of State discourse, and found analytical resonance only among collectivist critics such as Świda-Ziemba as described in the previous chapter. Reference to anti-Semitism was only made in the context of denying it as an inherent trait. The State made no official attempt to investigate and understand this phenomenon within Polish history.

Another historical element neglected by the IPN was the highly well organized nature of the massacre. Though not an IPN historian, Dariusz Stola argued that the manner in which the residents of Jedwabne conducted the killings demonstrated genocide and not a pogrom. His interpretation revealed the pervasive myth of Polish victimhood and innocence, in diluted form, ever present among those entrusted to compile an official new version of Polish-Jewish history. The intent to liquidate almost all the Jews from the town, the highly effective planning, and the organized and systemic execution, mirrored by definition, Stola argued, the genocide orchestrated by the Germans. Except the genocide of Jedwabne was a product of Polish perpetration.¹⁷⁷ This interpretation grossly varied from previous historiography and failed to resonate in any capacity with Polish values of victimhood and selfless heroism. Though Stola discussed the limited role of German participation, exclusive responsibility, including its historical legacy, fell upon the Polish perpetrators and society.

¹⁷⁷ Dariusz Stola. "Pomnik ze słów (1)." *Rzeczpospolita*. 1 June 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010601/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_1.html>; "Pomnik ze słów (2)." *Rzeczpospolita*. 2 June 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010602/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_2.html>.

The IPN criminal and historical investigation revealed competing visions of Polish history in the attempt to redefine and create a new official mythology. Chief prosecutor Ignatiew developed three layers of responsibility, while historians Machcewicz and Szarota accepted a limited form of Polish fault but on the condition of German orchestration. Both, furthermore, attributed elements of blame to the Jews, and Szarota even suggested Soviet conditioning as an operative force in the region. Żbikowski, on the other hand, allotted Poles with primary fault, but presented the perpetrators as individual criminals mostly motivated by hatred and greed. His vision departed from that of the conditionalist approach of Machcewicz and Szarota, yet it too succumbed to a diluted form of Polish victimhood and innocence. None of the views went as far as that suggested by Stola who presented a Polish population capable of orchestrating localized policies of complete extermination. The IPN investigators also neglected to analyze the role of anti-Semitism mitigating its importance as a potential factor in the motivations, as well as its impact on Polish collective responsibility.

The Apology

The apology served to highlight the inherent moral component in the struggle to define Polish responsibility. The conflict arose from the disparate application of morality in response culpability. The President, the Primate, and the Prime Minister interpreted responsibility as limited; nevertheless, each adopted a different moral position dictating their own values of moral worth – a unique repository of moral values narrating “how people should live, when they should laugh and cry, when they should shudder and rejoice, and how in the widest sense they should know good from evil, clear from

polluted.”¹⁷⁸ President Aleksander Kwaśniewski believed that responsibility, though limited, demanded a moral expression of guilt; Primate Józef Glemp agreed that an apology was needed, but one based on the conditionality of history; and Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek believed Polish responsibility extended only to the commemoration of the victims’ memory.

The debate began with the IPN president’s trip to the United States. Upon the invitation of the United States’ Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., Kieres left for the United States on February 12, 2001. During his address to the Museum, he laid the foundation for the Presidential apology. Based on preliminary findings, Kieres announced “[w]ith certainty, the Jews in Jedwabne died at the hands of the Poles. Truth, even though sometimes hard, should be humbly accepted.”¹⁷⁹ Kieres had very little choice but to acknowledge the evidence – Poles were the physical perpetrators in the killings. Where he had a choice was on the issue of responsibility. He expressed deep sorrow, grief, and a personal sense of enormous culpability, but felt hesitant in ascribing collective blame. Germans, he argued, orchestrated the Holocaust and bore primary responsibility.¹⁸⁰

A few weeks after Kieres’s address, President Kwaśniewski issued a similar statement. Kwaśniewski, an ex-communist party member and former leader of the successor communist party, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD),¹⁸¹ recognized the

¹⁷⁸ George Schöpflin. *Nations, Identity, Power*. New York: New York University Press, 2000. p. 76

¹⁷⁹ Bartosz Węglarczyk. “Kieres: bliski koniec śledztwa.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 14 Feb. 2001: 10.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej - The SdRP was born on 27 Jan 1990 from the dissolved PZPR. The SdRP became then the core of the SLD, a parliamentary coalition of about 32 political and trade union organizations launched in Jul 1991. On 27 Apr 1999 the SLD was registered as a party, in which the SdRP would be eventually merged. That happened on 16 Jun 1999 and subsequently the SdRP was disbanded. On

killings as Polish acts and added one fundamental moral element. The President stated that he would apologize at the 60th commemorative anniversary of the Jedwabne killings. There were two immediate effects to his response. The first forced the hand of both the Church and the Government to issue similar positions. The second launched a heated debate over what it meant to apologize.

On March 2, 2001, in a news interview during a visit to Israel, the President accepted Polish participation in the killings:

This was genocide committed by Poles from Jedwabne against their Jewish neighbours. An unusual bestial murder whose victims were innocent people. That is why we must today bow our heads and ask forgiveness. Maybe thereafter, Poles will become a better people.¹⁸²

Out of moral conviction, no new evidence could potentially change who committed the crime and the substance of the act. Kwaśniewski, therefore, announced the 60th commemorative anniversary during which he would issue an apology. Morality required such an act of repentance even though Poles were not collectively to blame for the crime.

The most important thing for me is for the truth to be known, for us to say what needs to be said in such a situation that we apologize for the actions of our compatriots – obviously this is not collective responsibility.¹⁸³

He insisted that Poles were not the ones who started the Second World War, and stated that the Germans bore that ultimate title. Jedwabne was not going to serve as a new starting point for Holocaust and World War Two history, he argued.¹⁸⁴ Kwaśniewski's apology was out of moral conviction based on a belief of a need for restitution, similar to the position held by the collectivists and moralists. His statement on collective responsibility, however, echoed the sentiments expressed by the conditionalists and

26 Mar 2004 SdPI was launched by splinters of the SLD. 7 May 2006
<<http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/poland.htm>>.

¹⁸² "Przeprosimy Żydów." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 3 Mar. 2001: 5.

¹⁸³ Mikołaj Lizut. "Jak przeprosić za Jedwabne." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 6 Mar. 2001: 1.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

reactionaries. Kwaśniewski crafted his statement in a manner that appealed to all the constituencies, but the problem was that moral conviction played an integral part in the formulation of collective responsibility. The President's attempt to disassociate the apology and collective culpability, thus, encountered considerable resistance, because for the Primate, the Prime Minister, and the public, the two were inherently linked.

On March 4, 2001, a couple of days after the President's statement, the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, publicly recognized that the "murder of the Jewish population by burning them alive, rounded-up by force into a barn by Poles, is indisputable."¹⁸⁵ Glemp – a conservative Primate – rejected Kwaśniewski's invitation to participate in the ceremony in favour of his own Church ceremony, based on Glemp's terms and conditions. Glemp agreed to hold a joint service with the Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź, Michael Schudrich, in recognition of the lives lost at the hands of Poles, during which he would issue his own apology. The apology, however, would be made exclusively to God and not the Jews. Furthermore, Glemp argued that the President did not have or enjoy the authority to speak on behalf of the nation; therefore, Kwaśniewski did not have the right to apologize in the name of all Poles.¹⁸⁶ Glemp's apology portrayed an image of conditional morality of political convenience. He employed the apology as a political tool against the State and as a means of public image rather than a genuine attempt at reconciliation.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ "O mordzie w Jedwabnem." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 5 Mar. 2001: 6.

¹⁸⁶ Bogumił Łoziński, et al. "Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga." *Rzeczpospolita*. 15 May 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010515/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_5.html>; "Przeprosic Boga i pokrzywdzonych." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 15 May 2001: 16.; "Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 166.

¹⁸⁷ Chapter 3 provides a greater analysis of the Church's role in the debate over the apology.

Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek, former Solidarity activist and member of the political right Electoral Action Solidarity (AWS)¹⁸⁸ party, delivered his response on March 6, 2001. Polish obligation in response to Jedwabne, he argued, was two-fold: “Commemoration in memory of the victims and the honest pursuit of truth.”¹⁸⁹ According to the Prime Minister, Poles did not bear responsibility, for “[t]he murders in Jedwabne were not committed either in the name of the nation, nor in the name of the Polish state.”¹⁹⁰ Like the individualists and reactionaries, Polish responsibility extended only to the recognition of the fault of those who committed the crime. To accept an alternative interpretation, one in which German responsibility escaped primary focus or attention, would be to falsify the truth. Poles did not cooperate with the Germans in the conduct of the Holocaust, and as such, Poles could not be held solely culpable for the killings.¹⁹¹ The Prime Minister’s concept of individual responsibility was also restricted by time. Present day Poland could not be blamed or be held accountable for the acts of a few individuals perpetrated sixty years ago. Today’s Poland was only responsible for the memory and the recognition of fault.¹⁹² “If we still have, as a nation, the right to pride in those Poles who risked and even paid with their lives saving Jews, than we must acknowledge the fault of those who participated in their murders.”¹⁹³ Buzek’s sense of

¹⁸⁸ Established in December 1996, the AWS was a coalition of approximately thirty centre and right-of-centre parties and organizations mostly from the solidarity movement. The party RS AWS was launched on 13 Nov 1997 as the official political wing of the Solidarity trade union and a new member of AWS. On 23 Dec 2000 the AWS was renewed as a federation of several parties with a core of four, RS AWS, ZChN, PPChD and SKL. In Mar 2001 the SKL left, leaving the alliance reduced to three parties, which adopted the name of AWSP. On 28 Apr 2002 RS AWS shortened its name to simply RS. The party was disbanded in early 2004. 7 May 2006 <<http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/poland.htm>>.

¹⁸⁹ “Życ w prawdzie.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 7 Mar. 2001: 1.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

moral conviction resided in the act of remembrance rather than in a sense of responsibility. It was not Poland's place to apologize, for Germans bore that obligation. Poles, though, had a present responsibility to remember the dead.

The public was equally divided on the issue as the President, the Primate, and the Prime Minister. In response to Kwaśniewski's apology, three distinct themes emerged that challenged his position. The first rejected the apology; the second considered the apology in moral redemptive terms; and the third rejected the other two as trends of political correctness lacking meaning and significance.

From the two major news sources, the *Gazeta Wyborcza* and the *Rzeczpospolita*, it was difficult to ascertain the arguments expressed by those who clearly opposed the apology. From the implicit reference of other commentators, one can infer their position. For example, some argued that the President should not apologize because the Polish State did not exist, that Germans perpetrated the act, or that members of the Polish underground government were not the ones killing the Jews.¹⁹⁴ Those who committed the act, who killed the Jews, ought to be the individuals who apologize. Another argument phrased the apology in conditional terms: "I'll apologize if you apologize" – a type of barter trade. For these individuals, the apology was not a moral issue but recognition of a national responsibility, which according to them was a falsification of Polish history.

The second group of critics attempted to refine the moral redemptive quality of the apology. Wojciech Sadurski synthesized part of this argument. He argued that apologies expressed shame rather than responsibility. By acknowledging and accepting the shame of a dark past, the State could then assume the right to demonstrate a feeling of

¹⁹⁴ Wojciech Sadurski. "Przeprosiny są potrzebne nam samym." *Rzeczpospolita*. 24 Mar. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010324/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_2.html#1>.

national pride in its various accomplishments. Apologies were not questions of responsibility but statements of moral character.¹⁹⁵ According to Nowak-Jeziorański , apologies tested that moral character as part of a process of redemption. An apology carried with it a redemptive quality whereby Poland would be made free of “the notion of responsibility over the Jedwabne atrocity.”¹⁹⁶ For both Sadurski and Nowak-Jeziorański , the apology was a means to break free of Poland’s past as a first step on the road to moral integrity and maturity.

Maciej Rybiński rejected both of these groups. They were simply movements and trends of an age marred with empty political apologies. Rybiński formalized a position that accused the use of apologies as tools of political correctness. Poland had entered into the age of superficial apologies in which everyone was willing to apologize and everyone wanted an apology in return. Contemporary apologies were simply reflections of modern trends with no deeper significance lacking expiation and penance, for these elements could only come from the individual.¹⁹⁷ Thus, national apologies were essentially empty symbols commonly used for political purposes. The apology was not a question of morality. It was a political device void of values and atonement.

Under growing pressure, Kwaśniewski issued a qualifying statement. The apology was to be made on behalf of those who felt the need and not in the name of the Polish nation.¹⁹⁸ The President hoped to settle the dispute with a compromise by offering a choice. Those who did not believe in a collective sense of responsibility had the comfort

¹⁹⁵ Wojciech Sadurski. “Przeprosiny są potrzebne nam samym.” *Rzeczpospolita*.

¹⁹⁶ Jan Nowak-Jeziorański . “Trzeba przeprosić.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 12 Apr. 2001: 5.

¹⁹⁷ Maciej Rybiński. “Przepraszać każdy powinien za siebie.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 24 Mar. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010324/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_2.html>.

¹⁹⁸ “Powiedzieć wszystko, co należy.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 14 Mar. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010314/kraj/kraj_a_1.html>.

of knowing the apology was not being made on behalf of the nation. Those who felt a sense of moral obligation could take comfort in the symbolic and moral value of a presidential apology. This did not placate his critics, but, nevertheless, it represented the growing division between the collectivists and individualists.

The apology demonstrated the pivotal link between responsibility and morality. In trying to separate the two in order to accommodate the individualists and reactionaries, the President only demonstrated this inherent bond. Thus, to be moral, one had to accept also collective culpability. The Primate adopted a political rather than a moral approach. He framed the Church apology on conditional terms in a political rejection of the State; and the Prime Minister defined responsibility in the context of obligation and duty rather than a sense of collective culpability. Depending on the interpretation of Polish identity, each had his own approach to the apology.

The International Campaign

In early April, the Government launched an official international initiative to address growing concerns of the Polish reputation abroad. Foreign Minister Władysław Bartoszewski led a high profile official visit to the United States with an abnormally large entourage of officials and representatives. They consisted of many Polish-Jewish experts chosen explicitly to address the Jedwabne controversy.¹⁹⁹ Bartoszewski played an extremely important symbolic role. He served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1995 and again in 2000. As a founding member of the World War Two organization Żegota, he risked his life to save Jews. He was also a prisoner of Auschwitz, a soldier in the Warsaw

¹⁹⁹ Bartosz Węglarczyk and Katarzyna Montgomery. "Jedwabne i reszta." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 4 Apr. 2001: 4.

uprising, twice a political prisoner of the communist regime, interned during Martial Law in 1981-1983, editor of the *Tygodnik Powszechny*,²⁰⁰ ambassador of Poland, a Senator, a leading academic, one of the first Poles to receive the Righteous among the Nations of the World medal, and an honorary Israeli citizen.²⁰¹ His credentials were a powerful symbol and a link between the Polish and Jewish communities.

The purpose of the visit to the United States, according to the Government, was to address specific questions of Government policy on three key issues: Jewish property restitution, anti-Polonism, and the Jedwabne Affair. The Foreign Minister, however, spent most of his visit defending the Polish reputation. His defence did not originate as a response to international criticism but to domestic perceptions of Polish society abroad. These perceptions concerned an international negative image of Poland characterized by backwardness and anti-Semitism. As a result, Władysław Bartoszewski framed his visit in the contours of a discussion that stressed Polish victimization, heroism, and democratic maturity. The visit demonstrated the important role of international perceptions in developing and re-developing mythologies. In acknowledging the killings, Bartoszewski attempted to create an image of a country that was responsible, while concomitantly re-integrating classic narratives of Polish victimhood and heroism.

Concern over Poland's international reputation began in November 2000. It started with fears over the eventual English translation of Gross's book. Gross's inaccurate thesis, expressed Żakowski, "will soon be published in the United States, and afterwards, surely, in Germany and a few other countries."²⁰² Machcewicz of the IPN

²⁰⁰ The *Tygodnik Powszechny* is a liberal Catholic weekly journal.

²⁰¹ "Władysław Bartoszewski." *Wikipedia*. 5 May 2006.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Władysław_Bartoszewski>.

²⁰² Jacek Żakowski. "Każdy sąsiad ma imię." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Every neighbour has a name." *Więź*.

wrote, “Jan T. Gross’s book will appear in the United States and Germany in a few months’ time, and it is this book...that will shape the views of a major part of world opinion on Polish-Jewish relations during World War II.”²⁰³

Three major fears emerged over the international impact of the book. The first fear championed Gross’s book as part of the Holocaust Industry. The translated book would launch an international campaign targeting Poles as the new perpetrators of the Holocaust. The second, characteristic of conditionalists, argued that the book would only serve to make the Polish-Jewish dialogue that much more difficult by reinforcing commonly held negative stereotypes about Poles. Finally, the third categorical fear was the potential international impact of a continued denial of Polish responsibility.

Using Norman G. Finkelstein’s book, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, Bogdan Musiał, a leading historical critic of Gross’s work and part of the reactionary movement, argued that *Neighbours* fit a general pattern in the United States that employed the Holocaust in an international campaign vilifying such countries such as Germany and Poland as a means for monetary gain and public fame. By demonizing these nationalities, forcing responsibility out of their respective governments, the United States could claim moral superiority and extract damages. In this context, Musiał feared that the English translation of Gross’s book would launch an international campaign to reclaim property.²⁰⁴ By using the story of Swiss banks holding onto Jewish gold as an analogy, Musiał stressed that Poland was on the verge of witnessing a similar international strategy designed to tarnish the Polish reputation by

²⁰³ Paweł Machcewicz. “W cieniu Jedwabnego.” *Rzeczpospolita*.; “In the shadow of Jedwabne.” *Więź*.

²⁰⁴ Bogdan Musiał. “We cannot be afraid: *Zycie*. 2 Feb. 2001.” *Więź*. April 2001
<<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

evoking examples of anti-Semitism and eliciting legal responsibility on behalf of the Polish state.²⁰⁵

The second fear involved the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Szarota, the IPN historian, expressed this concern.

Instead of obvious Polish successes in the field of political and economic transformation, our country and our people are associated with backwardness and anti-Semitism. Let's not have any illusions: information about crimes committed by Poles 60 years ago will only strengthen long-established stereotypes, and will worsen our not-very-positive image in the world.²⁰⁶

Ryszard Bugaj, another member of the conditionalist group argued that Gross's book would most likely enforce this anti-Semitic image that existed in the international community. It was not an issue of accepting or denying anti-Semitism in Poland, but in overcoming the stereotypes through less emotional and more responsible language. Otherwise, a language versed in accusation would only serve as a barrier to discussion between Poles and Jews.²⁰⁷

The third fear was the possible international ramification and perception in the failure to address *Neighbours* in constructive open dialogue rather than continued denial. The barrier to the Polish-Jewish dialogue, argued such collectivists as Jerzy Jedlicki, was not in the perpetuation of stereotypes but in the obstinate silence, even denial, over Poland's dark past within World War Two history.

[I]t is not without reason that bitter disenchantment has accumulated on the Jewish side over the years. Our own settling of accounts with our history and with our streetcar mentality are not what fuel Jewish complaints and stereotypes. On the contrary, if anything fuels them, it is the obstinate denial of Polish guilt, the refusal to admit the unpleasant parts of Polish legacy.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Bogdan Musiał. "We cannot be afraid: *Zycie*. 2 Feb. 2001." *Więź*.

²⁰⁶ Tomasz Szarota. "The national debate on jedwabne: reflections of a historian and specialist on national stereotypes." *Więź*.

²⁰⁷ Ryszard Bugaj. "Prawda historyczna i interes materialny." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 6-7 Jan. 2001: 20.

²⁰⁸ Jerzy Jedlicki. "How to deal with this: *Polityka*. 10 Feb. 2001." *Więź*.

Similarly Jan Tomasz Gross argued,

Polish society will be judged according to its reaction to the newly acquired information about this act of genocide. And although it may sound paradoxical, Jedwabne offers us a chance to re-establish credibility in the area of Polish-Jewish relations – provided that we accept the knowledge of this tragedy with humility and a sense of responsibility.²⁰⁹

Both authors stated that the fear of a negative Polish reputation or image did not lie in the book or in its contents as much as the approach the Polish nation chose to adopt. If the choice was perpetual silence or denial, then Poland was unlikely to emerge from a reputation of backwardness and anti-Semitism.

Employing the myths of victimhood and heroism, Bartoszewski defended the Polish reputation in a modified form. He addressed the fears expressed by Musiał and Szarota by challenging perceived international stereotypes that targeted and vilified the Polish nation as anti-Semitic. He also comforted the fears raised by Jedlicki and Gross. With its new democracy, Poland was willing and able to conduct an open examination of its history long kept silent by communist censorship.

Bartoszewski began his visit with an address to the United States' Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. bringing with him a translated book published by the Polish monthly *Więź*²¹⁰ entitled *Thou Shalt Not Kill*.²¹¹ It was an important piece of literature that complimented the English release of *Neighbours*. The publication consisted of approximately thirty essays and articles translated into English from the Polish press specifically in response to Jedwabne. Combined, the translated pieces provided the international community with a glance at the debate in Poland, its direction, and

²⁰⁹ Jan Tomasz Gross. "Mrs. Marx's pillow: *Tygodnik Powszechny*. 11 Feb. 2001." *Więź*. April 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

²¹⁰ *Więź* is a liberal Catholic weekly journal.

²¹¹ *Więź*. *Thou Shalt Not Kill: Poles on Jedwabne*. Warsaw: *Więź*, 2001 <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

discourse. However, the articles were a very specific selection chosen overwhelmingly from the liberal intelligentsia. Though there was a large cross-section of ideological newspapers, magazines, and journals, the majority of articles came from the most liberal of these sources.²¹² The publication had a definite slant that helped Bartoszewski present the Jedwabne Affair as an open, tolerant, respectful, and responsible debate. His speech reinforced an image of a responsible Poland willing to confront its dark past in a democratic society without forgetting its rich and heroic history. In this manner, Bartoszewski tried to placate the various fears that emerged prior to his visit. He advocated a new form of Polish heroism, one of law and order that held World War Two perpetrators legally accountable. He explained the silence as a product of communist censorship imposed by a foreign regime, and calling upon an image of Polish victimhood, he then mitigated anti-Semitism by advocating Polish heroism. Finally, in confronting Polish responsibility, he argued that it resided with the maintenance of the present democratic process of open debate.

Bartoszewski's address to the Holocaust Memorial Museum started with a modified version of Polish heroism rooted in the exercise of law and order, presenting an image of responsibility and honour. Respecting the rule of law, Poland held the perpetrators of World War Two crimes accountable for their actions before the courts. Such high-profile Nazi criminals as Hoess, Greiser, Biebow, Goeth, and Stroop – commanders and executioners of various ghettos including Łódź, Krakow, and Warsaw – were put on trial and subsequently executed. Even “those who committed crimes in certain localities, including Jedwabne, and had fallen into the hands of the police, did go

²¹² *Gazeta Wyborcza, Polityka, Rzeczpospolita, Tygodnik Powszechny, Więź, Wprost*

on trial.”²¹³ Poles did not shy away from their responsibility to prosecute criminals. By holding these individuals accountable, there existed a type of heroism. It was a heroism defined by law and order, the power of the scales of justice over the sword. The idea conveyed a message that presented Poles as a responsible and moral nation. Poles had the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong and prosecute offenders of this moral justice. The only reason why Poles and the world knew very little of this contribution of holding the Nazi regime accountable to the international community was due to the Soviet imposed system of censorship.²¹⁴

For forty years, Bartoszewski continued, Poles lived under a communist regime, victimized, and oppressed by a totalitarian system that barred it from a true debate over its own history. “The truth can come out only under the conditions of freedom and democracy. The truth cannot be discussed under the conditions of a totalitarian system.”²¹⁵ By shifting blame onto the Soviet Union and its imposition of communist rule, Bartoszewski not only shifted part of the responsibility, but also reinforced Polish notions of victimhood. Invoking this narrative, the Foreign Minister assuaged Polish fears by defending its reputation as a victimized and suffering nation. The defence of this belief allowed the Minister to mitigate Polish culpability. He did not deny Jedwabne, but he presented it in a historical context that also witnessed Polish suffering. As Jews suffered, so did Poles. In this manner, the perpetrators also became victims.

Bartoszewski, furthermore, drew on Polish heroism to enhance and complement Polish altruism. In the face of two totalitarian oppressive systems during the war, Poles

²¹³ Władysław Bartoszewski. “Address Delivered by Władysław Bartoszewski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., 5 April 2001.” *The Neighbours Respond*. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). 127.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* 128.

were still capable of performing great heroic deeds. The very example, he argued, of the six thousand trees in Jerusalem memorializing those Poles who risked their lives saving Jews proved this point. “[E]ach tree often symbolizes a family of three or four. Thus at least ten thousand people were involved.”²¹⁶ Each tree symbolized a fraction of the real extent and degree of Polish heroic activity.²¹⁷ Bartoszewski, extrapolating Polish heroism, attempted to demonstrate the pervasiveness of Polish help, the heroism of a victimized people. Thus, he challenged the belief of widespread anti-Semitism in Poland. Thousands of Poles would not have risked their lives if they were inherently anti-Semitic.

Within his speech, the Foreign Minister isolated and addressed each fear raised by the critics at home. He employed various narratives that sought mostly to defend the Polish reputation. He evoked victimhood as a means to shift responsibility, as well as explain forty years of silence. Bartoszewski also used the narrative of heroism but in two forms. The traditional form presented the Pole as a hero in saving Jews during the war in light of his own suffering. The second form was an adaptation that portrayed Poland as a nation capable of law and order. He defended the Polish reputation by utilizing traditional values and beliefs as a tool to placate domestic fears.

The Monument

Commemorative monuments are fundamental elements and tools in the process of cultural reproduction and maintenance. Their most basic role is to enforce moral worth by producing capital that reflects and facilitates the interplay of common customs, ritual practices, myths, symbols, and memories. Monuments or memorials are not social

²¹⁶ Władysław Bartoszewski. “Address Delivered by Władysław Bartoszewski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., 5 April 2001.” *The Neighbours Respond*. 128.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

luxuries. Because they build the capital needed for moral worth, commemorative acts are intrinsically linked with a culture's identity.²¹⁸ Problems with monuments arise when they do not necessarily reflect the values within a given society. Where memories differ, where customs diverge, where the approach to mythology is disparate, monuments and memorials begin to symbolize different things for different people, as was the case with the one in Jedwabne.

The controversy over the Jedwabne monument demonstrated the value and importance of commemoration in the re-making of cultural identities and national mythologies, as embodied in the ever-increasing divisions between various groups in society. Each group desired the memorial to reflect their own particular vision of what happened. The local community fought hard to omit mention of Polish perpetration by maintaining German responsibility; the Jewish community believed it important to identify those who committed the crime; and the President strove for compromise that, in part, reflected his own hesitation to enshrine Polish culpability in stone. Each vision sought its own dominance, its own monopoly over the monument's capacity to project a lasting narrative of national identity. The State organization responsible for the creation, development, and coordination of this new project was the Council for the Protection of the Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom (ROPWiM) – the State institute responsible for the recognition of nationally significant places, persons, and events. Under the direction of Secretary General Andrzej Przewoźnik, the ROPWiM produced a monument not much different than the original. Based on a compromise that favoured the local community, the monument physically memorialized the ideological divisions of responsibility.

²¹⁸ George Schöpflin. *Nations, Identity, Power*. 29.

Discussions over a new monument began as early as May 2000 at a meeting between representatives of the Jedwabne Town Council, the Association of Jewish Religious Communities of the Republic of Poland, and the President's Chancellery of the Council of Ministers.²¹⁹ The results of the meeting were not widely reported demonstrating the little importance and emphasis placed on the events of Jedwabne at this time. Gradually, as Jedwabne acquired increasing attention, a few voices began to employ the monument as a tool through which they wanted their visions of memory to take physical form. The first such article to illustrate this use originated with Jacek Kurczewski, a known sociologist and politician. He assumed a reactionary approach and argued that Polish responsibility did not extend to include the State. The State did not exist at the time in an official capacity. Though unofficially it did exist, the State was preoccupied with a war against Hitler and not in the cooperation with Nazi plans and policies in the extermination of Jews. To that effect, the Polish Republic's "conscience is free of mass slaughter and the organizing of pogroms or extermination camps."²²⁰ Thus, in proposing wording for the text to replace the old, he suggested that the State only recognize the remembrance of the dead and the manner by which they died: "From the Polish State in remembrance of its Jewish citizens murdered by their neighbours in fratricidal rage."²²¹ Kurczewski employed the memorial text in a fashion that expressed his particular view of Jedwabne. The State did not bear responsibility because it did not endorse or participate in the killings. He used the monument as a means to absolve State culpability by commemorating the victims while apportioning their neighbours with the

²¹⁹ Andrzej Kaczyński. "Oczyszczanie pamięci." *Rzeczpospolita*. 19 May 2000, 9 Sep. 2004
<<http://arch.rzeczpospolita.pl/a/rz/2000/05/20000519/200005190036.html>>.

²²⁰ Jacek Kurczewski. "Ritual murder: *Wprost*. 10 Dec. 2000." *Więź*. April 2001.
<<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

²²¹ Jacek Kurczewski. "Ritual murder: *Wprost*. 10 Dec. 2000." *Więź*.

blame. The State had the sole responsibility to commemorate, recognize, and acknowledge what happened.

In response, Janusz Marciniak argued in moralist terms that the monument was more than just a commemorative act of recognition. It was a moral statement at the national level. The message had to resonate throughout the nation by challenging mythology to evoke change in collective memory. He, therefore, suggested, “A place of Jewish execution. Poles burned alive 1600 people. July 10, 1941.”²²² Employing the language of nations, Marciniak elicited feelings of attachment, belonging, and ownership over the monument as a moral challenge to Polish identity. Both suggestions, though different in approach, accepted Polish perpetration and the need to replace the existing memorial.

The old monument, as it stood since the 1960s, consisted of a boulder on a pith erected by the Łomża branch of the Association of Combatants for Freedom and Democracy.²²³ The text on the boulder read: “Site of the suffering of the Jewish population. The Gestapo and the Nazi gendarmerie burned 1600 people alive. July 10, 1941.” The wording clearly identified the Germans as having committed the act, which had been officially discounted in February 2001 by the IPN. The memorial had to be, therefore, removed. By March, the ROPWiM approved a new design similar in principle to the old.²²⁴ It comprised of a generic obelisk with room for a commemorative text.

²²² Janusz Marciniak. “Trzeba pisać prawdę.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 16-17 Dec. 2000: 22.

²²³ Związek Bojowników o Wolności i Demokracji.

²²⁴ Robert Winnicki and Mikołaj Lizut. “Jak upamiętnić ofiary z Jedwabnego: Zmiana pomnika.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 9 Mar. 2001: 1.

Initially, the text remained unfinished pending further consultations and the conclusion of the IPN investigation.²²⁵

The first direct opposition to the ROPWiM's work originated from within a largely rejectionist local community represented by Henryk Biedrzycki. Because the new monument was to be built in the town of Jedwabne, the Council had to directly deal with the town's representatives. In this respect, the controversy over the monument was unique compared to the other events. Supported by the Committee for the Defence of the Good Name of Jedwabne – led by the local parish priest, Edward Orłowski – and by the self-professed anti-Semite Leszek Bubel,²²⁶ the Jedwabne community began to mobilize against the State in an attempt to exert influence and to protest the idea of Polish perpetration. Their opinions remained marginalized in the mainstream press, but their actions, provided a strong measure of the community's opposition and different vision.

In April 2001, the ROPWiM realized that it did not own all of the required land to construct the memorial. The issue concerned two small portions of private property that still belonged to Henryk Biedrzycki. He was the grandson of Bolesław Śleszyński who on July 10, 1941 provided the barn to burn the Jews. The state desired the properties as part of a special infrastructure that would prevent any private development within the vicinity

²²⁵ "Zeby nie dzielić." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 17-18 Mar. 2001: 4.

²²⁶ Bubel is a self-professed anti-Semite born in 1957 and educated as a jeweler. He served as a parliamentary representative in the first *Sejm* from 1991 to 1993 before becoming the president of the Organization against Anti-Polonism, the Polish Organization Not for the European Union, the National Front (SN), and the Polish National Party. The National Front party, formed in 1989, pulled on Endek tradition and the teachings of its original founder Roman Dmowski. Often employing anti-Semitic and fundamentalist Catholic language, the SN joined the LPR in 2001. Those opposed to the amalgamation reconstituted the SN party and formed the Polish National Front with a re-instated pre-World War Two fascist wing called the Camp of Greater Poland (OWP). The Polish National Party fielded Bubel as their presidential candidate in the 2005 elections without much success. Bubel is also commonly affiliated with Radio Maryja.

in order to preserve the character, symbolism, and respect of the location.²²⁷ The ROPWiM, thus, entered into negotiations with Biedrzycki to purchase the land, but the grandson prolonged the talks stipulating various conditions that were encouraged by Leszek Bubel.²²⁸ Bubel offered 100 000 Polish złoty – over twice the sum offered by the State – to Biedrzycki for the purchase of the land. He would pay Biedrzycki the full amount on the condition that the land would be passed into the stewardship of the Committee for the Defence of the Good Name of Jedwabne. The Committee, under Orłowski's implicit control, led a campaign that denied Polish involvement in the killings of the Jews.

Spurred on by Bubel's influence, Biedrzycki used his offer as leverage against the State arguing for a settlement of zł 50 000 on the condition that the property be transferred to the Jedwabne Town Council after one year.²²⁹ Even under the threat of state expropriation, Biedrzycki refused to sell the land, and accused the State of uncooperative behaviour for withdrawing from the negotiations. Biedrzycki finally chose to sell to the Government, but not before demonstrating the community's opposition. The monument for the local community represented a threat, for it had the potential to identify them as the killers. This did not conform to their selective collective memory, which perpetuated German responsibility. They also expressed their vision of Polish non-involvement through the memorial text by wording that omitted Polish perpetration and encouraged German influence. This elicited a serious response from the Jewish

²²⁷ Urszula Arter. "Cena za mogiłę Żydów: Bubel miesza w Jedwabnem." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 28-29 Apr. 2001: 3.

²²⁸ Bikont. *My z Jedwabnego*. (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka SA, 2004) 139.

²²⁹ Urszula Arter. "Cena za mogiłę Żydów: Bubel miesza w Jedwabnem." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

community, which invoked its own vision that identified Poles as those who committed the act.

The process began with preliminary discussions held between the ROPWiM and a select group of representatives of the Jedwabne community, the Jewish community, and the State.²³⁰ The meeting produced a proposal based on a text submitted by Rabbi Jacob Baker – a former pre-war resident of Jedwabne. According to Przewoźnik, the proposal stemmed from the current state of knowledge and the emotional sensitivity of the Affair. He also knew that the suggested text would not satisfy everyone, but for him, the inscription had the essential approval of the Jedwabne Mayor.²³¹ The text read:

In memory of the Jews of Jedwabne and the region, men, women, children, co-inhabitants of this land, murdered as well as burned alive in this place on July 10, 1941. Let the sin of hatred ignited by German Nazism serve as a warning so that it may never again turn against the inhabitants of this earth.²³²

It omitted Polish perpetration, and continued to enforce German responsibility. Compared to the original monument, there was little difference. The myth of German culpability remained as the dominant narrative, though subtly altered to conform to a select version of history. Rather than stating German perpetration, it identified Nazi influence as the root that sparked the killings. The story embodied within the proposal continued to perpetuate the same type of mythology as the original. The use of the monument, furthermore, identified a very strong moral component that went beyond apportioning responsibility. The monument also served as a moral judgment. The Germans were

²³⁰ Paweł Wroński. “Wynegocjowany napis w Jedwabnem: Epitafium zbrodni.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 29 May 2001: 4.

²³¹ Andrzej Kaczyński. “Kompromisowa inskrypcja w Jedwabnem.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 29 Apr. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010529/kraj/kraj_a_1.html>.

²³² Pamięci Żydów z Jedwabnego i okolic, mężczyzn, kobiet, dzieci, współgospodarzy tej ziemi, zamordowanych oraz żywcem spalonych w tym miejscu 10 lipca 1941 roku. Ku przestrodze potomnym, by rozpalony przez niemiecki nazizm grzech nienawiści już nigdy nie obrócił przeciwko sobie mieszkańców tej ziemi. Jedwabne 10 VII 2001.

responsible and immoral. Because Polish participation remained absent from the text, they were absolved of the immoral charge.

The Polish-Jewish community was quick to respond. It rejected the proposal as misleading and unacceptable. The reference to German responsibility and the omission of Polish culpability continued the same narrative enshrined within the original monument, argued Rabbi Michael Schudrich of Warsaw and Łódź.²³³ Konstanty Gebert – a leading and influential representative of the Jewish Community Association and a journalist for the *Gazeta Wyborcza* – stated that the monument did not have to condemn morally or accuse, but it could neither provide an alibi for those who perpetrated the killings. Compromises were not made between truth and lies.²³⁴ Gebert attributed responsibility to the Poles. The proposal's silence on Polish culpability complimented by the moral accusation of Nazi German ideology generated a false image of reality. The monument, thus, served as a vehicle of deception, complicit in fostering a culture of lies. The memorial had to reflect the truth. Identifying Poles as perpetrators was not an overt moral judgment but a statement of fact. Monuments as means of building moral capital, were bound to historical reality and not the deceit of selective memory.

The response of the Jewish community precipitated the Polish President to intervene. Kwaśniewski recognized the compromise as weak and morally inadequate.²³⁵ The ROPWiM, obligated to respond, launched a second round of negotiations from which it produced a modified proposal:

²³³ “Nie ma zgody na napis na pomniku.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 31 May 2001, 9 Sep. 2004
<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010531/kraj/kraj_a_5.html>.

²³⁴ “I tak wiemy, kto zabił.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 15 June 2001, 9 Sep. 2004
<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010615/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_4.html#8>.

²³⁵ “Potrzebny inny napis.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 7 June 2001: 4.

In memory of the Jews of Jedwabne and the region, men, women, children, co-inhabitants of this land, murdered as well as burned alive in this place on July 10, 1941. Jedwabne, July 10, 2001.

It was the “neutral” part of the original proposal, argued Kwaśniewski.²³⁶ The text did not attribute responsibility, nor did it issue an overt moral denunciation. The omission of nationalities absolved a Polish sense of culpability and blame and perpetuated the idea of Polish innocence. The President’s hesitation to change this version reflected the growing influence of the local community, as well as all those who rejected collective responsibility: the individualists, reactionaries, and rejectionists. The new proposal reflected a vision that continued to deny Polish perpetration. By removing responsibility from the monument’s symbolic narrative, the memorial became a tool of this version of the Polish story. The monument, therefore, was not about the “truth” or validated history or the commemoration of victims, but a means by which the Polish State advocated a particular narrative of the national self-perception. Even a year after the debate, Kwaśniewski continued to defend the wording of the text arguing that Poles still required time to digest the information.²³⁷

The controversy over the memorial text served to demonstrate two important elements. First it illustrated the importance of monuments in myth creation. Secondly, it emphasized the growing schism in identity within Polish society.

The Exhumation

The exhumation highlighted two types of divisions. The first was the developing example of competing visions between various State and public interests. The second

²³⁶ Paweł Wroński. “Krótszy napis.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 15 June 2001: 8.

²³⁷ “Wykażcie zrozumienie.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 13-14 July 2002: 2.

demonstrated the divisions within the Jewish community. The Jewish community, like its Polish counterpart, was not a unified polity. The Government had to contend with the interests of the IPN, segments of the public, as well as pressure from both the religious and secular factions of the Jewish perspective. The IPN sought an exhumation as part of its forensic investigation supported by public representatives who desired a numeric count of the victims. The Jewish religious community decried this reason as insufficient to warrant a violation of the rights of the dead. The Jewish secular community viewed the religious response as an exertion of authority over State activity. The religious establishment did not have the right to hijack a process of historical truth. Asked to reconsider the application, the Government negotiated a compromise and produced a limited or partial exhumation.

The exhumation began at the end of May 2001 with an IPN submission of an application to the Ministry of Justice.²³⁸ The primary reason for the request was to determine the exact number of victims and the method of their deaths.²³⁹ The IPN provided additional reasons including the confirmation of German involvement, a verification of witness testimony,²⁴⁰ and a collection of evidence for the prosecution of individuals;²⁴¹ however, most of these were secondary used to validate the desire to determine the number of dead. The primary reason followed a trend in public discourse most commonly employed by reactionary critics.

The numerization of the dead was a part of a series of tools designed to challenge the integrity of Gross's research. It also served to question and measure Polish

²³⁸ "Minister zawiesił ekshumację w Jedwanbem." *Rzeczpospolita*. 21 May 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010521/kraj/kraj_a_8.html>.

²³⁹ Agnieszka Kublik. "Tradycja czy śledztwo." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 21 May 2001: 6.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Agnieszka Kublik. "Będzie ekshumacja." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 23 May 2001: 2.

responsibility. The most cohesive expression of this tool came in an article written by one of Gross's main opponents, Bogdan Musiał. He accused Gross of uncritically and arbitrarily accepting the figure of 1600 victims. The number assumed a symbolic status, and "triggered an inappropriate and none-too-serious discussion."²⁴² The premise employed by Musiał was to deconstruct the value of Gross's historical accuracy in order to mitigate the severity of the Jedwabne events and, hence, Polish responsibility. The IPN's initiative found considerable resonance and support among such critics, for they were convinced that the exhumation would validate their version of a mitigated Polish culpability and the overwhelming responsibility of the Germans.

The Jewish community opposed this immediately. The response was led by Rabbi Michael Schudrich who argued that the reasons provided for the exhumation were insufficient justification for the violation of the rights of the dead. The unearthing of the dead disturbs religious sanctity and sacredness of the human soul according to Jewish religious law, and such exhumations are prohibited.²⁴³ The Rabbi's primary concern resided with the intact souls of the deceased and their collective remembrance.²⁴⁴

Konstanty Gebert agreed with Schudrich, and challenged the IPN's initiative on the basis of religious freedoms. The pursuit of truth and history did not supercede the right of religious practice and belief. Every look, every glance at the remains of the victims, Gebert continued, was a form of rape of their soul. Regardless of how many victims or the method in which they died, the truth would not convert those convinced of Polish innocence. The dead could not be used to appease meanness, which purposefully

²⁴² Bogdan Musiał. "The Pogrom in Jedwabne: Critical Remarks About Jan T. Gross's *Neighbours*." *The Neighbours Respond*. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). 324-326.

²⁴³ Agnieszka Kublik. "Tradycja czy śledztwo." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁴⁴ "Nie ma konfliktu." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 24 May 2001: 2.

sought holes in history for self-appraisal.²⁴⁵ Thus, by challenging the primary reason on the basis of religious rights, Gebert was in effect using the exhumation as a measurement of democratic maturity. The State's capacity to demonstrate an effective response respecting the Polish commitment to the protection of religious rights of practice and worship would illustrate the country's and the collective's ability and adherence to the democratic process.

Gross had a very different perspective. The controversy over the exhumation stemmed from the interference of the religious establishment in State matters. Gross accused the religious Israeli Orthodox right of hijacking the process and illegitimately depriving Poles, both Christians and Jews, of the truth.²⁴⁶ The lack of an exhumation deprived the victim's families and the Polish and Jewish nations of what truly happened, he argued. The debate over Jewish religious practice had been a subject of considerable controversy for thousands of years, and no authoritative monolithic view had emerged on the issue. No spiritual movement should dictate what Poles and Polish-Jews had the right to know about their collective history.²⁴⁷ Gross, like his opponents, had a vested interest in using the exhumation as a validation of his research. His concern did not lie with the number of dead but in the method in which these people died. In either case, Musiał and Gross supported the exhumation as a means to verify and reconstruct their versions of history.

²⁴⁵ Konstanty Gebert. "Ekshumacja." *Rzeczpospolita*. 15 June 2001, 9 Sep. 2004

<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010615/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_1.html>.

²⁴⁶ Urszula Arter and Agnieszka Kublik. "Ofiar było mniej." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 5 June 2001: 1.

²⁴⁷ Jan Tomasz Gross. "Szukamy dalej." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 6 June 2001: 19.

In response, the Minister of Justice, Lech Kaczyński, held a meeting with the affected parties.²⁴⁸ He met with Kieres, Schudrich, and two representatives of the Jewish community, Stanisław Krajewski and Piotr Kadlicki.²⁴⁹ The agreement reached allowed for a limited or partial exhumation closed to the public and under the supervision of both the Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź and Rabbi Manechem Ekstein (an expert in exhumations and Jewish religious law). Only Ekstein would handle any human remains found during the exhumation.²⁵⁰ The agreement appealed as a compromise. The IPN got an exhumation but limited. The Jewish religious community gained observer status and the expertise of an exhumations and religious law expert from Israel. The government balanced the interests of the investigation with those of religious practice.

The exhumation lasted for ten days. The IPN confirmed that Poles perpetrated the killings though there existed some indication of German involvement. Secondly, the estimated number of victims placed the total between 100 to 200 people. This included women, children, infants, and the elderly.²⁵¹ Subsequent revisions raised the figure from 300 to 400 victims.²⁵²

The Justice Minister, the IPN, and the President varied in their response to the results. The presence of German bullet shells allowed Kaczyński, for example, to perpetuate the belief of German responsibility,²⁵³ even though a later forensic report concluded that these shells originated from different time periods inconsistent with the

²⁴⁸ Agnieszka Kublik. "Tradycja czy śledztwo." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁴⁹ Agnieszka Kublik. "Będzie ekshumacja." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁵⁰ Krzysztof Darewicz. "W obecności rabinów." *Rzeczpospolita*. 23 May 2001
<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010523/kraj/kraj_a_5.html>.

²⁵¹ Urszula Arter and Agnieszka Kuślik. "Ofiar było mniej." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁵² Andrzej Kaczyński. "Ślubne obrączki i nóż rzeźnika." *Rzeczpospolita*. 10 July 2001, 9 Sep. 2004
<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010710/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_4.html>.

²⁵³ Urszula Arter and Agnieszka Kuślik. "Ofiar było mniej." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

summer of 1941.²⁵⁴ The exhumation also provided a glance at the extent and brutality of Polish perpetration. The demographic composition of the victims shocked the IPN president. Whereas before he used the number of victims and German involvement as a justification for the exhumation, these no longer held the same value.

The number of victims is not important in this case. Innocent people died including women, children, and even infants. Whether there were 1600 or 200, it does not make a difference. Furthermore, the fact of German presence does not change the value of Polish responsibility. The legal and moral value of what happened in Jedwabne does not change.²⁵⁵

Even Polish President Kwaśniewski commented on the massive loss of innocence. “We must admit that this brings us shame.”²⁵⁶ The immediate results of the exhumation were neither clear nor evident. Polish perpetration remained the one indisputable fact, but reactionaries such as Musiał and even the Justice Minister Kaczyński continued to advocate German involvement and the number of victims as a challenge to Polish responsibility.

The exhumation embodied the on-going struggle of competing interests. The IPN argued in favour of an exhumation as part of their investigation. Gross and his critics eagerly supported this initiative, as means to justify their visions. The Jewish religious community, however, strongly protested. The Government’s intervention sought a balanced compromise, and brought forth a plan that addressed most of the concerns. The inconclusive results from the partial exhumation, however, continued to fuel doubts and beliefs in Polish responsibility perpetuating the growing divisions within both the State and public.

²⁵⁴ Paweł Wroński. “Śledztwo IPN w sprawie mordu Żydów w Jedwabnem: to nie te łuski.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 20 Dec. 2001: 4.

²⁵⁵ “Co wynika z ekshumacji.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 6 June 2001: 1.

²⁵⁶ “Potrzebny inny napis.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 7 June 2001: 4.

The 60th Commemorative Anniversary

The 60th commemorative anniversary symbolized the pinnacle of the Jedwabne Affair, but it was not a moment that brought the nation together. For an event that was to mark a turning point in Polish-Jewish relations, a confirmation of democratic maturity, an accounting of Polish history and identity, the 60th anniversary instead reflected and reinforced the tensions present in society. It embodied the transformational changes in force throughout the country. The array of opinions and views, interpretations of history and mythology, the discordant State response, and the complex interactions between all these factors created different levels of resonance, different expectations that worked against a unified demonstration of public solidarity. The State's own response to Jedwabne embodied this process. State institutions contended with the challenge to reconcile a new and unfamiliar history with an old mythology to restore cohesion into Polish identity. The 60th commemorative anniversary brought the division over the re-making of Polish myth into a visible public demonstration. The State divided the anniversary into two distinct venues: the ceremony and a concert. The ceremony catered to the collectivists who believed in an apology and recognition of responsibility. The concert offered those opposed, the individualists, an opportunity to commemorate the victims while maintaining a vision of foreign culpability.

The official ceremony began in the late morning of July 10, 2001 in the town square of Jedwabne. With Chopin's Funeral March playing in the background, the President took to the stage and addressed dignitaries, guests, the nation, and the international community.

We are gathered here, together with all the people of our country who have sensitive consciences, together with the secular and religious moral authorities that strengthen our attachment to basic values, revering the memory of the murdered and expressing our

deepest sympathy because of the baseness of the perpetrators of this murder. We express our pain and shame; we give expression to our determination in seeking to learn the truth, our courage in overcoming an evil past, our unbending will for understanding the harmony. Because of this crime we should beg the shadows of the dead and their families for forgiveness. Therefore, today, as a citizen and as the president of the Polish Republic, I apologize. I apologize in the name of those Poles whose conscience is moved by that crime. In the name of those who believe that we cannot be proud of the magnificence of Polish history without at the same time feeling pain and shame for the wrongs that Poles have done to others.²⁵⁷

Kwaśniewski's position had not changed. His reluctance to accept collective responsibility stemmed from an earlier challenge of his authority. Nevertheless, his desire to apologize demonstrated a strong sense of individual moral conviction, which he used to generate moral capital. By apologizing, even in the name of a limited few, the President at least demonstrated the capacity of regret, pain, and shame. The apology, therefore, became a symbol of the President's recognition of both collective and moral responsibility.

To those who attended the ceremony, the President's words carried mixed meanings based on personal interpretations and associated expectations. Some hailed it as a great moral victory while others remained uncertain. What bound them all to come was a belief in the need to apologize.

[T]oday's ceremony demonstrates how strong we are because we are the only nation in this part of Europe addressing our history, our approach to our history. Aleksander Kwaśniewski's apology was made in the name of those who wanted to apologize. This is not about a general apology, for it is up to each person's conscience to decide how they are to approach this crime.²⁵⁸

The 60th anniversary for IPN president Kieres was a sign of unprecedented strength. It was part of Poland's evolving transitional process and, thus, a function of democracy.

²⁵⁷ Andrzej Kaczyński and Zbigniew Lentowicz. "Kadisiz w Jedwabnem." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "Sąsiedzi sąsiadom agotowali ten los." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Address by President of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski at the Ceremonies in Jedwabne Marking the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Jedwabne Tragedy on 10 July 2001." *The Neighbours Respond*. 131-132.

²⁵⁸ "Jedwabne 60 lat później." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 July 2001: 4.

The ceremony served to measure Poland's democratic capacity in challenging its institutions, history, and mythology while managing competing views and interests.

Bronisław Geremek, the leader of Freedom Union (UW), considered the ceremony as a process of moral redress and reconciliation and not an overt attribution of responsibility. He remarked, "This is an unusual ceremony, outstanding. The President of the Republic and the Israeli Ambassador spoke in one voice. This was not a ceremony of blame, but rather a ceremony of remembrance, forgiveness, the elimination of hatred."²⁵⁹

Leszek Miller, the chair of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), considered it as a question of honour, duty, and obligation. "We paid tribute to Poles who were murdered by other Poles, and this murder was not committed in the name of the Polish state. We are doing today what we should be doing as representatives of the Polish state."²⁶⁰

Individuals came to the ceremony inspired by such motivations as curiosity, responsibility, truth, compassion, and duty. For some, it was hard to speak, for the facts remained largely elusive.²⁶¹ For others, responsibility clearly remained with the Germans.²⁶² A couple of young Polish twenty year olds found a lost and forgotten past,²⁶³ while a writer came to seek feelings of compassion.²⁶⁴ The survivors and family descendents came out of respect for the dead, to pray for them,²⁶⁵ and to seek the truth. Rabbi Jacob Baker applauded the apology and ceremony. Jews were to be thankful to

²⁵⁹ "Jedwabne 60 lat później." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Andrzej Kaczyński and Zbigniew Lentowicz. "Kadisiz w Jedwabnem." *Rzeczpospolita*.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ "Czy ten dzień niesie nadzieję." *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11 July 2001: 3.

²⁶⁴ "Jedwabne 60 lat później." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁶⁵ "Czy ten dzień niesie nadzieję." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Poles, he argued, for it was in Poland that Jews created their history.²⁶⁶ The event was a moral reckoning in which Poles expressed fault through their tears of guilt. “These tears should pass into history as one of Poland’s most beautiful acts. They should cleanse and remove the hatred. Let these tears cleanse the bloody happenings of 60 years ago.”²⁶⁷ The Israeli Ambassador also spoke highly of the ceremony, though expressing some reservation regarding the memorial.²⁶⁸ The ceremony was a good step forward, but the memorial text must “clearly state who committed the atrocity.”²⁶⁹ For Rabbi Michael Schudrich, it symbolized hope in a real future in which Poles and Jews free themselves from the bondage of a dark past plagued by haunted memories.²⁷⁰ “The moving words from the President are for us, Jews, important. But they should be more important to the national Polish soul. After this day, hope has a real future.”²⁷¹ The apology and the ceremony were the first steps in a long process of redemption of the Polish national soul.²⁷² Even with different reasons for attending and impressions of the ceremony, all these individuals placed value in the apology as a morally symbolic gesture part of a process of redemption.

Many individuals, organizations, and institutes protested the ceremony through their absenteeism. The Primate, for example, announced his non-attendance as early as March 2001.²⁷³ The Episcopate made a similar announcement in May.²⁷⁴ The ceremony,

²⁶⁶ “Do Jedwabnego oplakać przodków.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 10 July 2001: 4.

²⁶⁷ Andrzej Kaczyński and Zbigniew Lentowicz. “Kadisz w Jedwabnem.” *Rzeczpospolita*.

²⁶⁸ Mikołaj Lizut and Piotr Pacewicz. “Polsko-żydowska solidarność.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 July 2001: 3.

²⁶⁹ Mikołaj Lizut and Piotr Pacewicz. “Mówi Szewach Weiss: polsko-żydowska solidarność.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 July 2001: 3.

²⁷⁰ “Czy ten dzień niesie nadzieję.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² “Czy ten dzień niesie nadzieję.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁷³ “O mordzie w Jedwabnem.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

²⁷⁴ “Za winy nasze i winy wasze.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 4 May 2001: 1.

therefore, lacked the presence of any official representative of the Polish Roman Catholic Church. The Committee for the Defence of the Good Name of Jedwabne, led by the Jedwabne parish priest Edward Orłowski who opposed the apology, issued a public boycott encouraging all Jedwabne citizens to do the same.²⁷⁵ Very few local residents attended the event. The most notable, however, were Jedwabne Mayor Krzysztof Godlewski and Town Council chair Stanisław Michałowski.²⁷⁶ As a result of his participation and cooperation with State authorities, the Council forced Godlewski's resignation and the community forced his immigration to the United States.²⁷⁷ The ruling Electoral Action Solidarity (AWS) Government, the Prime Minister's party, also did not attend. Instead, Prime Minister Buzek held an alternative event free of apologies, free of Polish culpability, but one that continued to encourage a vision of foreign responsibility.

The concert provided the opportunity for those who disagreed with the apology to attend a commemorative event that also reinforced a mythology of Polish innocence. It was a symbolic moral act of respect rather than an acknowledgement of penance or redemption. Buzek's statements reflected this division and highlighted the schism that had developed between him and the President. The Prime Minister called on tolerance, openness, hospitality, and respect, but blamed the ill and decay of Polish-Jewish relations upon foreign occupation. Like his recognition during the debate over the apology, Buzek continued to mitigate Polish responsibility. Responsibility lay with external forces, with the Germans and the Soviets. Their imposition of totalitarian systems on Poland, argued Buzek, brought the ruin of peaceful Polish-Jewish relations.

²⁷⁵ Anna Bikont. *My z Jedwabnego*. 176.

²⁷⁶ Andrzej Kaczyński and Zbigniew Lentowicz. "Kadisze w Jedwabnem." *Rzeczpospolita*. 11 July 2001.

²⁷⁷ Anna Bikont. "Pięć lat po Jedwabnem." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 4-5 Mar. 2006: 24-25.

History binds Poles and Jews. For centuries, our nations lived in peace side-by-side. Our relations fell apart when foreign forces enveloped Poland... Today, Poland, free and sovereign, open to the entire world, is making up for the losses caused by totalitarian systems.²⁷⁸

The 60th commemorative anniversary by means of the ceremony and the concert reflected the schism that emerged over the course of the Jedwabne Affair. Though the interpretations of Polish myth varied greatly, the anniversary visibly demonstrated an increasing polarization of society. The ceremony catered to those who, for reasons of moral penance and redemption, or a sense of collective responsibility, believed in the need to apologize in order to demonstrate a capacity within the Polish nation to accept and confront its own history. The concert attracted those who still questioned Polish responsibility and, as such, did not believe in the need for an apology. These two groups symbolized the schism: the liberal collectivists and the conservative individualists.

The State response to the Jedwabne Affair exemplified the transformational changes underway in Poland. The collapse of communism gave rise to the expression of different and divergent opinions and views in a public forum among both the general public and the State apparatus. Thus, in response to the Affair and its destabilization of Polish myth, the State was not a unified polity. Comprised of numerous actors with varying interests and approaches, the response depended on the individual major events and the visions that each generated. The IPN investigation struggled to create an official history, but was torn by different interpretations and visions of responsibility. Prosecutor Ignatiew divided responsibility among Poles and Germans. Machcewicz and Szarota

²⁷⁸ "Nie można bać się przyjaźni." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 July 2001: 5.

additionally included the Jews and Soviets, whereas, Żbikowski placed the majority onus on Polish society.

The apology reflected a similar dilemma but one faced in the political realm between the President and Prime Minister. Each sought to place Polish culpability within their understanding of Polish mythology. The President's vision included an apology based on guilt, shame, and redemption. The Prime Minister thought otherwise. He recognized Polish perpetration, but he did not feel sufficiently connected to the crime in order to warrant an apology. Responsibility for Jedwabne was that of foreign forces most notably that of the Nazi Germans.

Władysław Bartoszewski on his visit to the United States set out to defend the Polish reputation by addressing domestic fears of the international perception of the Polish nation. In its defence, the Foreign Minister employed narrative threads of victimhood and heroism as means to curb criticism of anti-Semitism while fostering an image of a country capable of reasonable democratic conduct.

The memorial further portrayed the disparate uses of myth and memory within society and the growing social polarity. It illustrated the importance and value placed in monuments as tools of cultural reproduction. The new Jedwabne memorial encountered considerable resistance by local representatives who attempted to block its creation and, later, shaped the wording of the memorial text in such a way as to omit Polish responsibility. Their approach elicited a strong reaction from members of the Jewish community who believed this attempt as a continuation of a historical lie that perpetuated Polish innocence. The State, in its compromise, produced a text that was silent on responsibility, thus, condoning a vision that denied Polish perpetration.

The exhumation illustrated a different element in the struggle over visions of Polish identity. The State's approach became a measure of its capacity to balance religious rights with secular interests. The IPN, filing a request to conduct an exhumation of the burial sites in Jedwabne, found support among both Poles and Jews who, for different reasons, desired the completion of the full investigation. The application process encountered difficulty from the Polish-Jewish religious community who demanded the respect of Jewish religious law that prevented the disturbance of the dead. The State settled on a compromise that produced a partial exhumation that continued to fuel doubts of Polish culpability and strengthened the position of the reactionaries and rejectionists.

The 60th commemorative anniversary reflected all these interests and divisions. Through two competing venues, a ceremony and a concert, the State responded to the growing schism in Poland's myth re-making process. The ceremony, led by the President, represented those who felt guilt, pain, responsibility, or duty to honour the dead through an apology in recognition of Poland's dark past. The concert, under the tutelage of the Prime Minister, also presented a venue that commemorated the victims, but phrased it in terms that assigned culpability on foreign influence. Together, the President and Prime Minister solidified their positions and came to symbolize the stark division within public opinion.

Chapter 3

The Church Response

You shall not murder.
- Exodus 20: 13

All the elders of that town nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the wadi, and they shall declare, "Absolve, O LORD, your people Israel, whom you redeemed; do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people Israel." Then they will be absolved of bloodguilt. So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, because you must do what is right in the sight of the LORD.
- Deuteronomy 21:8-9

As a central institute of cultural authority, the Roman Catholic Church continues to enjoy considerable political, social, and economic power in Poland. The Church's historical role as a protectorate of Polish heritage and culture has given it a unique and elevated position. The election of Karol Wojtyła as Pope John Paul II in 1978 cemented a Polish identity strongly committed to an active social Catholic catechism. Of approximately 39 million Poles, 89.8 percent identify themselves as Roman Catholic, and 75 percent of these consider themselves practicing.²⁷⁹ Polish participation in religious activities has remained high since the collapse of communism despite the widespread changes including the introduction of Western modernity, materialism, and consumerism.

The Jedwabne Affair served as a catalyst in deepening a growing divide in the Church establishment. The traditionally conservative Church witnessed the emergence of a small but increasingly vocal liberal elite of clergy, laity, and Christian organizations that challenged the Church hierarchy and its complicit support in perpetuating conservative ideology. This relatively small group was not necessarily of one mind. They advocated the need to assume responsibility, but they differed on its applicability. Some

²⁷⁹ "Poland," *CIA Factbook*. 4 Apr. 2006 <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pl.html>>.

argued for a collective sense, while others argued individual, Christian, and moral. Their unity, however, stemmed from two common positions: their moralist approach and their public and open challenge of the Church hierarchy. The Polish Primate, meanwhile, fought strongly against this liberal and highly educated group by mitigating Polish culpability. His approach found initial resonance within the Church hierarchy, and led to an apology set by conditions justified by political theology. Liberal influence managed to alter the Church confession to win a symbolic victory, but the divisions remained as a result of the Jedwabne controversy.

Three major junctures evolved over the course of the Church response. The first began in the form of a discussion among influential laity. This debate set the tone of the argument that came to characterize the divisions between the liberal collectivists and moralists and the conservative reactionaries and rejectionists. The initial part of the debate culminated in an article by Archbishop Józef Życiński who stressed the imperative of assuming moral responsibility. His statements, coupled with those of the Polish President, forced a response from Primate Józef Glemp. The Primate's statement of recognition and apology, the second major turning point, greatly intensified the growing schism between the two factions. Finally, the results from the Episcopal Conference regarding the commemorative service and Glemp's subsequent justification triggered another round of intense criticism. The left questioned the genuineness of the apology and charged the Church hierarchy with avoiding responsibility through the use of political theology. The pressure from the liberals convinced the Episcopate to adopt an apology that expressed sincerity and appealed for forgiveness.

Church Structure

The political groupings within the Polish Church hierarchy are more complicated, nuanced, and covert than that witnessed in secular society. The individual nature of the establishment based on bishopric legitimacy coupled with the secretive and opaque operations of the Church present a significant challenge in determining marked ideologies. This makes it difficult to ascertain a thorough and nuanced understanding of the complicated processes present within the Church hierarchy, therefore, limiting knowledge and greater comprehension. However, it is readily possible to discern divergent movements that reflect more complicated internal political and ideological divisions. Prior to the Jedwabne Affair, for example, there were visible indications of a growing malaise in the Church community. With the hierarchy's complicit tolerance, a conservative Catholic radio station called Radio Maryja, founded by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, gained increasing popularity with an audience estimated in the millions. Aside from conducting daily radio prayer sessions for the elderly, the station operated political programming of an anti-Semitic and ultra-Catholic nature. Radio Maryja's critics in secular media, most notably in the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, accused Rydzyk of spreading anti-Semitic propaganda, the denial of the Holocaust, and various conspiracy theories promoting xenophobia and hatred. Those within the Church community who opposed Rydzyk's views, mostly a small group of the Catholic intelligentsia, such as Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek,²⁸⁰ began slowly to voice their opinions through various liberal lay Catholic publications such as *Więź* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*. Toward the late 1990s,

²⁸⁰ "Za zbrodnię trzeba przeproszać." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 8 Mar. 2001: 6.

these divisions became increasingly visible, but it was the Jedwabne Affair that clearly exposed and solidified these groupings.

Christian Public Opinion – The liberal and conservative divide

The Church response to Jedwabne originated among a handful of influential and notable laity who struggled with the moral complications over the question of responsibility. Their debate helped shape the moralist direction, argument, and tone of the increasingly visible divisions between the liberals and the conservatives within the Church community. On the liberal side were two editors of the *Tygodnik Powszechny* – a leading Catholic intellectual weekly at the forefront of the Polish-Jewish dialogue – Halina Bortnowska and Stefan Wilkanowicz. They both considered responsibility as a process that evolved over time imbued with moral meaning and significance. In this context, responsibility was also transcendental. It was not confined to the perpetrators of the Jedwabne killings or the particular region alone, because it dealt with the moral value placed on human life. The moral implications placed responsibility within the collective rather than the individual.

Connected in time by virtue of its transcendental moral value, Polish culpability came in two forms. The first derived from the bonds formed by and through historical legacies. According to Halina Bortnowska, a Catholic activist and commentator and former member of the editorial staff of the Catholic intellectual monthly *Znak*, who participated in the work of the World Council of Churches, and was a member of the International Council of *Pax Christi*, and co-founder of the *Open Republic Association*

Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia,²⁸¹ the public response to Jedwabne characterized by the persistent vilification and dehumanization of the person demonstrated this process. Present day anti-Semitism in Poland built on the culture, attitudes, and behaviour of the past as symbolically exemplified by the events of Jedwabne. Anti-Semitism dominated this region becoming a social norm, an acceptable and tolerated approach. This standard bred a culture poised to hatred with the capacity to kill.²⁸²

[A]mong the Jedwabne population, there would not have been so many people willing to kill their neighbours had they been certain that their countrymen would condemn them for doing so. Even if they acted under strong Nazi pressure, people always assess the social costs and benefits resulting from their actions. It is very likely that those who murdered their Jewish neighbours felt that they had the support of what they assumed were like-minded Polish neighbours and opinion makers.²⁸³

The anti-Semitism evoked by the Jedwabne controversy indicated something deep and festering, something remnant of a memory based on a history that perpetuated a legacy.

The second component derived from the moral use of history. History is a narrative, a process of story telling, that also carries and imbues a moral message. The story presented by the events of Jedwabne, argued Bortnowska, generated an image in which the life and personhood of an individual and a people was conditional.²⁸⁴ This lesson, according to her, had to change. If it were to remain, the message would perpetuate the same type of festering hatred imbedded in Poland's historical legacy. The moral use of history included the "responsibility of each and of all to remember the personhood of others"²⁸⁵ and the "responsibility to preserve memory as a warning – the

²⁸¹ <http://or.org.pl/>

²⁸² Halina Bortnowska. "Gdy sąsiad nie ma imienia." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 27-28 Jan. 2001: 24.; "When a neighbour has no name." *Więź*. April 2001. <<http://wicz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

memory that is opposed to the large-scale quantifiers that dehumanize.”²⁸⁶ Employing history in context of morality demonstrated the transcendental nature of responsibility. Responsibility not only transcended time but also identity, for it bound morals and values across generations and peoples.

Stefan Wilkanowicz, a long-time editor-in-chief of *Znak*, a Catholic activist and commentator, deputy chair of the National Council of Lay Catholics, president of the *Znak* Foundation for Christian Culture, deputy chair of the International Auschwitz Council, and a member of the Polish Episcopate’s Committee for Dialogue with Judaism, embraced Bortnowska’s fundamental assertions, but placed them within a more theological framework. The entire process of responsibility described by Bortnowska was characteristic of and compatible to Christian values. Responsibility derived from two major linkages that bound the present with the past. The first link was that of gratitude “for the valuable things that have been passed on to us, for equipping us with different types of tangible and intangible goods.”²⁸⁷ This encompassed the idea of historical legacy, the behaviours, attitudes, and culture that generated those elements upon which present societies shape and build their memories. These “tangible and intangible goods” were also part of a package that included historic evils and the possible regret and compensation required of the new generation. Gratitude and historical legacies illustrated the key link that bound responsibility across the past and present.

This relationship was concomitantly applicable to the future generating the Christian element of responsibility or the second major linkage, that of solidarity. “This

²⁸⁶ Halina Bortnowska. “Gdy sąsiad nie ma imienia.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*; “When a neighbour has no name.” *Więź*.

²⁸⁷ Stefan Wilkanowicz. “A few reflections on responsibility and patriotism: *Znak*, February 2001.” *Więź*, April 2001. <<http://wicz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

solidarity with our ancestors is connected with something else – with our solidarity with those who will come after us.”²⁸⁸ Christian responsibility, argued Wilkanowicz, spoke of something that went beyond the link between the past and the present. Because time did not exist for God, Christian responsibility linked people across the past, present, and future.²⁸⁹ Though Jedwabne occurred in the past, the transcendence of moral responsibility rooted in God’s timeless and eternal existence retained the crime within the present. Unconfined by time, God and His laws were enduring, and so was any violation of His divine moral law. In this sense, a given people, a particular nation, in a given time was not only responsible for the acts, morals, and values of their ancestors but also for their own and the kind they desired to inspire in future generations. Wilkanowicz’s argument closely resembled Bortnowska’s advocacy of responsibility as a means to transmit a moral message into the future as a reflection of present accountability for the immorality of the past. Both authors presented responsibility as a function of time and morality, therefore, exhibiting characteristics of transcendentalism.

On the conservative side of the debate within the Christian lay community was Antoni Macierewicz, a conservative politician, publisher of the national-Catholic weekly *Głos*, the chair of the Catholic-National Movement since 1998, and a regular supporter of Radio Maryja. His response, characteristic of the reactionaries and rejectionists, targeted Bortnowska’s moralist approach. Though his interpretation of responsibility relied more on the mythological implications to Polish identity rather than a moral transcendentalism, Macierewicz’s response phrased the debate as a “hate campaign directed at Poles and

²⁸⁸ Stefan Wilkanowicz. “A few reflections on responsibility and patriotism: *Znak*. February 2001.” *Więź*.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Poland.”²⁹⁰ By presenting Jedwabne as a politically driven and orchestrated campaign, he perpetuated a Polish historiography based on the mythological narrative of victimhood absolving the country from its responsibility.

Macierewicz considered Jedwabne the result of a Jewish and anti-Polish campaign designed specifically to vilify the Polish nation. The Jewish campaign was part of a larger movement led by the Holocaust Industry to promote a new methodology that presented a history in which

Poles are responsible for the Holocaust; the operation of the Nazi genocidal machine was underpinned by traditional, Polish, backward, atavistic anti-Semitism; the Jews were in no special way helpful to the Soviet occupation either in 1939 or in 1945 and, quite the contrary, were its main victims; and the Soviet army and communist regime were supported by peasant and small-town anti-Semitic masses who collaborated with every occupying authority – with the Germans, the Russians, the communists – in short, THE POLES ARE GUILTY.²⁹¹

Such a history allowed Jews to create “prerequisites for the recovery of the property that belonged to the Jewish community murdered by the Germans on Polish soil.”²⁹²

The second campaign was more internal though Jews also belonged to its implementation. The anti-Polish campaign “willingly erect[ed] the edifice of anti-Polish ‘historiosophy’ while the rest remain[ed] timorously silent.”²⁹³ It was a liberal movement that called “for the punishment of the Polish nation for its crimes against the Jews”²⁹⁴ and tried “to shoulder Poles with blame for the Holocaust under German occupation while ‘forgetting’ that the real perpetrators were the Germans.”²⁹⁵ Agnieszka Arnold, Andrzej Paczkowski, Jan Tomasz Gross, Tomasz Szarota, Stanisław Krajewski, Jan Nowak-

²⁹⁰ Antoni Macierewicz. “The revolution of nihilism: *Głos*. 3 February 2001.” *Więź*. April 2001. <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Jeziorański, Krystyna Kersten, and Jerzy Holzer, including the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, were all part of this liberal movement to generate a new history that targeted Polish identity.²⁹⁶ Macierewicz perpetuated the image of a victimized Poland. Poland was under attack from an external Jewish campaign seeking to reclaim Polish property, while simultaneously from within by a liberal alliance of Poles and Jews advocating an unjustified responsibility.

The views set out by Bortnowska, Wilkanowicz, and Macierewicz illustrated the growing divisions and respective opinions between the liberals and the conservatives among the Church laity. Bortnowska and Wilkanowicz built a model of moral responsibility that transcended both time and space. Macierewicz rejected Polish culpability by deconstructing and discrediting the historiography as an intentional campaign of Jews and liberals against Poles and Poland.

The first major shift within the Church response came from Józef Życiński, the Archbishop Metropolitan of Lublin, professor at the Catholic University of Lublin, member of two Vatican congregations, and chair of the Polish Episcopate's Commission for the Lay Apostolate. It was the first such major statement made by a member of the Church hierarchy. In an article written for the March edition of the Catholic intellectual monthly review *Więź* and later reprinted in the *Rzeczpospolita*, Życiński morally condemned Polish behaviour in Jedwabne. "Even if establishing a dividing line between good and evil is sometimes more difficult than we think, Jedwabne is an example of moral evil."²⁹⁷ He went on to argue that

²⁹⁶ Antoni Macierewicz. "The revolution of nihilism: *Głos*. 3 February 2001." *Więź*.

²⁹⁷ Józef Życiński. "The banalization of barbarity: *Więź*. March 2001." *Więź*. April 2001. <<http://wiesz.free.ngo.pl/jedwabne/main.html>>.

the spiral of evil knows no ethnic restrictions, and we cannot consider any environment to be immune to the radiation of primitivism. This bitter truth affords protection against ideological delusions whereby some people attempt to extol blood ties or cultural affinities. These values cannot be worshipped as contemporary deities because human susceptibility to evil transcends all the borders of the categories we hold dear.²⁹⁸

His qualifying statement was a direct commentary on the views advocated by such critics as Macierewicz. According to Życiński, Macierewicz fell into the category of people who worshipped “blood ties or cultural affinities” as a means to reject the applicability of evil. Evil was transcendent in space and affected Poles as much as any other nationality.

Like Bortnowska and Wilkanowicz, Życiński utilized moral responsibility over time. What transpired in Jedwabne was a product of a moral evil pervasive in a larger social context that encouraged and accepted such acts at all levels of society.

[T]he spreading of barbarity reached the inhabitants of small towns, who calmly silenced the voices of their conscience by referring to the authority of those who were acting as the ultimate experts on the subject of the Jewish question. Genocide – trivialized at a certain stage of social control – started a chain reaction that spread beyond the confines of political systems and cultural traditions. The *ad hoc* pollution of the intellectual environment by ignoring the truth and shunning moral responsibility permitted the uninhibited growth of all kinds of distortions, including the excusing of barbarity by small-town communities that had previously only read about barbarity in the papers.²⁹⁹

Życiński employed Bortnowska’s historical legacy as a demonstrative tool of the moral link between the past and the present. Jedwabne happened because society allowed it to happen. By the transcendent bonds that bind this past with the present, moral responsibility required recognition of these linkages through an expression of solidarity.

We need to pray for the victims of that massacre, displaying the spiritual solidarity that was missing at the hour when they left the land of their fathers. In the name of those who looked upon their death with indifference, we need to repeat...“I have sinned against the lord,” regardless of whether any protest from the onlookers might have been efficacious in that situation.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ Józef Życiński. “The banalization of barbarity: *Więź*. March 2001.” *Więź*.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Applying Wilkanowicz's defining characteristic of Christian responsibility, solidarity also meant the connection between the present and the future. Evoking such an expression of unity in which Poles recognized responsibility, Życiński generated an image of a future course of behaviour both in the immediate and generational sense. The Archbishop's moralist approach was in tandem and in support of the emerging liberal faction of the Church community.

Concomitantly with the publication of Życiński's article, Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski in an interview for an Israeli news source recognized Polish perpetration and announced the 60th commemorative anniversary to be held in Jedwabne during which he would apologize. Coupled with the Polish President's recognition and apology, Życiński's statements contributed to the immediate response of Primate Józef Glemp, the de facto head of the Polish Church.

The First Statement by Primate Józef Glemp

On March 4, 2001, in an interview for a Catholic radio station, Cardinal Józef Glemp recognized that the "murder of the Jewish population by burning them alive, rounded-up by force into a barn by Poles, is indisputable."³⁰¹ His announcement on behalf of the Church was a carefully crafted political response that challenged the legitimacy of the rising liberals within both the religious and secular communities. The Cardinal questioned Życiński's model of morality by introducing an interpretation that secured the individualist reactionary and rejectionist position of conservative ideology.

³⁰¹ "O mordzie w Jedwabnem." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Glemp's subsequent attempt to debase the President demonstrated the Primate's own political manipulation of the Jedwabne events.

The Primate's application of responsibility was a means to generate a framework of morality that catered to conservative ideology. The Primate considered morality as a gradient of culpability. Morality stemmed from a generational responsibility conditional on a scale of fault. Glemp agreed with Życiński to the extent that morality transcended time. "As a spiritual person, I am above all interested in the moral aspect. It is connected with the recognition of a generational responsibility, which is based on the apology to God for ancestral sins and to the descendants of those who were hurt."³⁰² Apologizing to God for ancestral sins demonstrated the same kind of moral link between the past and the present as employed by Bortnowska, Wilkanowicz, and Życiński; however, the Primate placed the value of the bond on a sliding scale. "Naturally, the scale in recognizing fault depends on the discernment of the objective truth, therefore, from the research of the causes of sin and the circumstances of the committed crime."³⁰³ Morality, connected with generational responsibility premised on conditionality, was a spectrum that shifted with each rendition of the truth, that resided in the eye of each beholder. The truth, as Glemp interpreted, did not include a collective extermination of Poland's Jews. The Jedwabne Jewry were killed by a small group of "morally savage" men. The circumstances failed to justify culpability without limitation.

We are not allowed in the name of justice to label any nationality as a nation of murderers. We do not do this with the Germans, among whom hitlerism emerged in its most fullest, as much as the blindness that provoked the people of Jedwabne and its surroundings cannot be blamed on the entire Polish nation.³⁰⁴

³⁰² "O mordzie w Jedwabnem." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Though he spoke of a generational responsibility, which involved an apology both to God and the descendants of those who were hurt, the Cardinal only spoke of the former and not the latter in reference to the joint prayer service. The Church was glad and willing to commemorate the 60th anniversary in a joint prayer of apology to God by both Poles and Jews.³⁰⁵ The application of conditional culpability predicated on a small group of perpetrators blinded and provoked by the ideology of “hitlerism” allowed Glemp to appear moral in tone through an apology to God without losing the conservative base, which, exemplified by Macierewicz, did not accept collective culpability nor an apology to Jews who were responsible for the vilification of Poles and Poland. In this manner, Glemp strengthened the moral legitimacy of the conservative camp while concomitantly attacking the liberals represented by Życiński.

The Cardinal’s apology was also a response to growing political pressure originating from the Office of the President. His attempt to debase the President demonstrated Glemp’s own manipulation of the apology for political means. Glemp, first of all, criticized the politicians, especially those who called for a national apology, for dictating the terms of morality and methods of grief and sorrow.

I would not want for politicians to impose on the Church the method in which it should express sorrow for a crime committed by a particular group of believers who were also morally savage. Nor should they [the politicians] define the ideology that comes to dress the prayer for penance.³⁰⁶

Though he used anonymous examples of “a few high ranking politicians”³⁰⁷ to demonstrate this political interference, his remarks primarily targeted the President, who a few days earlier announced an apology and the method of its delivery. According to

³⁰⁵ “O mordzie w Jedwabnem.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Glemp, President Kwaśniewski offered a framework for morality by means of the apology, as well as a method for its expression through the 60th commemorative anniversary. This framework defined the ideology for atonement by dictating the terms of responsibility. Kwaśniewski's apology implied a collective or national sense of responsibility. This moralist approach, according to Glemp, was hasty spurred on by hysteria rather than a fairness and humility. Jedwabne "is not about a hasty and clamorous penance, but a fair insight into oneself in humility and in truth. We cannot, undertaking acts of general repentance proposed by the politicians, disturb the good name of those who gave their lives rescuing Jews."³⁰⁸ The Primate not only accused politicians of dictating morality, but he also charged them as irresponsible and hysteric infringing on the moral jurisdiction of Church authority.

For these reasons, on behalf of Church sovereignty, the Primate did not intend to participate in a State sponsored ceremony or apology. By participating in either of the events, the Church would serve as a political pawn, a tool in a political agenda. Glemp's objection in participating was a political decision based on a demonstration of sovereignty and not in the moral dilemma over responsibility. "I understand that the role of politicians is to plan resolutions to difficult problems. The Church should not be included in such plans. Instead of introducing peace, [the Church] would become a tool in the war."³⁰⁹ As an alternative, Glemp suggested a service between Poles and Jews in Warsaw "be it in front of the Heroes of the Ghetto monument, in one of the churches, or in the synagogue."³¹⁰ Unlike the President's ceremony to be held in Jedwabne, the

³⁰⁸ "O mordzie w Jedwabnem." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Primate refused to have it outside of the capital. In this context, Glemp's concluding remarks illustrated his politicization of Jedwabne. The Church apology was more a function of the political dialogue over institutional sovereignty, a show of opposition to the State and in particular to the President rather than a moral expression of guilt.

The First Response – A growing polarization

In general, the conservatives in the religious community did not advocate their positions by means of polemic essays and interviews as widely as the liberals. Though Macierewicz provided a sense of their type of ideology, the conservative clergy were most visible by means of their local organized activities. The two most notable clerics to gain considerable press coverage in the *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* were the local Jedwabne parish priest and the bishop of the diocese. Their response characterized the Primate's framework that permitted the perpetuation of an ideology and belief in conditional morality and a rejection of collective responsibility. Jedwabne priest Father Edward Orłowski and Bishop of Łomża Stanisław Stefanek recognized Polish perpetration, but refused to accept it in any capacity as a Polish crime.

Orłowski supported the idea of German and Jewish culpability, and did much to organize the community against any form of collective responsibility. He presented the Jedwabne Poles as heroes and patriots who actively fought against the Soviet regime. The Jews were the traitors, responsible for betraying the Polish nation. Jewish disloyalty caused the ruin in Polish-Jewish relations.³¹¹ He did not deny Polish participation, "but these were criminal margins of society and not the Jedwabne community. I am not

³¹¹ "Niech przeprosi margines." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 5 Mar. 2001: 6.

convinced that an apology in the name of the nation deserves to be said for these margins. After all, criminals are born into every nation.”³¹² “Some of the people were forced, some were desperate from the harm done by the Jewish side. There may have even been some who went of their own will,”³¹³ but most importantly, “[t]his was the work of the Germans who forced the Poles.”³¹⁴

Orłowski went on to direct the Committee for the Defence of the Good Name of Jedwabne, which he used as a method to organize the local community against the liberal tendencies of an apology. The purpose of the committee was to represent the town to the media.³¹⁵ The initial idea originated with Michał Kamiński (ZChN), the *Sejm* representative for Łomża, in an open letter to the country’s authorities protesting a “global smear campaign” against Jedwabne and all of Poland. Gradually, the idea for a committee took form, which Orłowski publicly announced following the Mass on March 4, 2001. The Mayor, Krzysztof Godlewski, accepted the chairmanship on the condition that the group adopted the declaration of apology made by Glemp as a mandate for activity. The membership rejected Godlewski’s stipulation, and he lost his position.³¹⁶ The committee was not open to any interested individual. Orłowski controlled the membership, and never revealed its official composition. According to interviews for the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the candidates comprised the dregdes of the local community among them drunkards and wife beaters.³¹⁷ The committee fell apart soon after its creation, but

³¹² Andrzej Kaczyński. “Czy jestem stróżem brata mego?” *Rzeczpospolita*. 8 Mar. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010308/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_8.html>.

³¹³ “Niech przeprosi margines.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³¹⁴ Robert Winnicki and Mikołaj Lizut. “Biskup o spisku i o sumieniu.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 12 Mar. 2001: 1.

³¹⁵ Robert Winnicki. “Dobre imię Jedwabnego.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 6 Mar. 2001: 4.

³¹⁶ Andrzej Kaczyński. “Czy jestem stróżem brata mego?” *Rzeczpospolita*

³¹⁷ Anna Bikont. *My z Jedwabnego*. 99.

resurfaced in name closer to the 60th commemorative anniversary, at which time the Committee for the Defence of the Good Name of Jedwabne issued a public boycott of the ceremony.³¹⁸

Orłowski continued his opposition to the notion of Polish responsibility especially during and after his Sunday sermons. He never denied Polish participation, but he mitigated responsibility by promoting German perpetration in planning, supervision, and execution. Following the Easter service, for example, he announced the promotion of Lech Niekrasz's book *Operation Jedwabne: Myths and Facts*. "Niekrasz reveals the mechanisms of manipulation, as well he tries to subvert the myths suggested by Jan Tomasz Gross that Poles supposedly committed the crime."³¹⁹ The author later admitted that he wrote the book on commission and based it exclusively on the research of those historians who opposed and negated Gross's work.³²⁰

As a bishop, in the practical and theological sense, Stefanek's remarks were far more influential and insidious. His initial response appeared close in tone to that of the Primate, but it changed considerably within a week. Stefanek did not deny Polish participation; however, he phrased the Jedwabne Affair as a "rapacious, falsified, and modern campaign...[that] reaches far."³²¹ Like Macierewicz, the bishop rejected responsibility by promoting a Poland victimized by the Holocaust Industry.

Stefanek's immediate response to Glemp's statement encouraged the idea of conditionality. Moral responsibility resided in the gradient degree established by further

³¹⁸ Andrzej Kaczyński and Zbigniew Lentowicz. "Kadisz w Jedwabnem." *Rzeczpospolita*.

³¹⁹ Wawrzyniec Klościński. "Pokój według ks. Orłowskiego." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 17 Apr. 2001: 5.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ Robert Winnicki and Mikołaj Lizut. "Biskup o spisku i o sumieniu." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

research and analysis.³²² Because this framework guaranteed one certainty, some element of Polish participation, the bishop used the opportunity to minimize the extent of participation as a manipulation of the truth by a campaign designed specifically to attack Poles. Stefanek, thus, questioned the moral value of an apology, as well as any form of collective or moral responsibility.

On March 11, 2001, Orłowski invited Bishop Stefanek to Jedwabne for Sunday Mass. The parish priest asked the bishop to deliver a sermon. Stefanek claimed to have been forewarned by a friend in Warsaw that “[t]here will be a great attack on Jedwabne. It is about money. You will have a huge problem Bishop.”³²³ Jedwabne was part of a forced attempt to manipulate the truth and have Poles admit to responsibility in order to make money.

One thing is certain; the best way to make money is on the innocent spilt blood of Jews. One needs to know this. Enormous mechanisms have been mobilized, and Jedwabne is not the last. We have rich methods of propaganda, lies, provocation, myth building, that are all cloaked in the toga of historical research. That is why with great difficulty we are arriving at the truth. Contemporary history is greatly falsified.³²⁴

Stefanek’s intentions did not demonstrate a desire for reconciliation. He employed conspiracy theories to mitigate and even negate Polish responsibility. Glemp’s framework offered Stefanek the opportunity to question the extent of Polish perpetration, and as such, the gradation of its moral value while he evoked anti-Semitic stereotypes.

Orłowski and Stefanek were not the only two conservative clerics to respond. The more moderate Bishop Stanisław Gądecki and the radical Father Henryk Jankowski also captured public interest. Gądecki had more credibility among conservative Catholics than

³²² “Odkryć prawdę.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 7 Mar. 2001: 6.

³²³ Robert Winnicki and Mikołaj Lizut. “Biskup o spisku i o sumieniu.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

Jankowski. He chaired the Polish Episcopal Committee on the Dialogue with Judaism; whereas, Jankowski engaged in controversially extreme exhibitions of Christian faith.

Gądecki, in his response, individualized responsibility and marginalized morality to a specific timeframe. Rather than the links that bound the past and the present, moral responsibility resided exclusively with the perpetrators.

Where there is discussion of responsibility, one must speak of the concrete person. Like in all prosecutorial investigations, we blame the person who directly partook in the act. We cannot apply the principle of collective responsibility in these kinds of acts [the killings of Jedwabne]. It is impermissible to spread this upon the entire attitudes of Poles during the Second World War toward the Jews.³²⁵

He placed the onus on the individual obliging him to apologize. Gądecki's position did not fundamentally differ from those of Orłowski and Stefanek. Each of them dismissed a collective acknowledgement of blame or culpability. Gądecki was unique in that he chaired the committee for the dialogue with Judaism, and represented a closer familiarity with Catholic-Jewish relations. His approach reflected the individualist conservatism present within the greater hierarchy.

A far more provocative approach came from Henryk Jankowski of Saint Brigid Church in Gdansk. His position mirrored Stefanek's, but rather than using modern anti-Semitism, Jankowski employed traditional Polish anti-Semitism – an anti-Semitism that has become unique to Poland within the European community.³²⁶ In comparison to the other representatives of the conservative coalition within the Church community, Jankowski's protest was the most extreme. In preparation for Easter, Jankowski placed a miniature model of a burnt barn with a protruding skeleton engulfed in flames next to the altar. On the opposite side laid Jesus surrounded by skulls with a sign on the floor that

³²⁵ "Nie odpowiadamy zbiorowo." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 10-11 Mar. 2001: 7.

³²⁶ Ireneusz Krzemiński. "Polish-Jewish Relations, Anti-Semitism and National Identity." *Polish Sociological Review*. 32.

read, “Jews killed Jesus Christ and the prophets and they also persecuted us,”³²⁷ as well as “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”³²⁸ According to him, this was the voice of conscience that represented the truth. History must serve the truth and not be continually revisited, “but since it was done, than I ask myself, who crucified Christ and who is now crucifying Poles?”³²⁹ He too admitted that some individual Poles participated in the killings, though this did not warrant a call for collective responsibility.³³⁰ His application of traditional religious-based anti-Semitism was the most arcane tool employed by the rejectionist conservatives; however, it demonstrated a percentage of the population in Poland and within the Church community who still subscribed to this unique form of Polish anti-Semitism.³³¹

The liberals were far more vocal in their assessment of Jedwabne and in their response to both the President and the Primate. Like the conservatives, the liberals were not an organized coalition. Their arguments and approaches varied, but what bound them together was a similar fundamental understanding of the moral unconditional transient links in society across time and space. In this capacity, they challenged the dominant conservative establishment of the Church hierarchy. Comprised of such influential and outspoken clerical intelligentsia as Father Michael Czajkowski, Archbishop Józef Życiński, Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, Father Stanisław Musiał, and Archbishop Henryk Muszyński. This group also gained support from various known Jewish representatives,

³²⁷ Grażyna Borkowska. “Stodoła w grobie pańskim.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 13 Apr. 2001: 5.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ Based on a 1996 Social Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) survey, Ireneusz Krzemiński determined that traditional anti-Semitism in Poland comprised 11.5% of the population.; Ireneusz Krzemiński. “Polish-Jewish Relations, Anti-Semitism and National Identity.” *Polish Sociological Review*. 32.

Christian commentators, and Rabbis. Together, they generated an image that recognized a moral collective form of culpability.

The first to respond was Bishop Pieronek. He, like most of his peers, agreed that “[t]hose who committed the crime are unquestionably responsible.”³³² This, however, did not suffice. According to Pieronek’s collectivist approach, society was far more complicated than just a collection of individuals. Individual feelings, attitudes, and beliefs interacted to form shared histories, values, and morals affecting everyone within and across time in this collective structure. The Jedwabne crime

weighs down to some degree on us all, us Poles. As the proper reasoning goes, if we take pride in our great people, in the great figures of our history, than unfortunately, we must also take on our shoulders those who did not present themselves well in that history.³³³

These interactions that formed a common identity depended on the generational links between the past and the present to project a vision for the future. The inherent value transmitted through and by these links was moral responsibility, which defined society across time and space. The crime of Jedwabne was “a genocide in all certainty.”³³⁴ It represented an aberration in Polish morality for which the bonds that bind the present and the past demand an apology. For this reason, Pieronek agreed with a national apology regardless of marginal perpetration.

Must we apologize for the margins of society? We must apologize for all crimes differentiating fault and accountability, which morally burdens all people, all those who are close, all who belong to the same ethnic group or nation.³³⁵

Even the actions of marginal members of a society had the potential to affect entire communities, collectives, and nationalities.

³³² “Za zbrodnie trzeba przepraszać.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 8 Mar. 2001: 6.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

Archbishop Muszyński echoed many similar views as those of Pieronek and Życiński. He recognized the bonds of history that contributed to the formation of collectivities and the links that they created across time. Muszyński greatly enriched the theological component of the liberal faction. Returning back to the fundamental principles of Judeo-Christian doctrine, he defined the Jedwabne crime in a moral context based on the timeless applicability of God's divine law. Furthermore, the archbishop's alternate process of expiation directly challenged Glemp's chosen approach and reflected a yearning for greater understanding and support between the clerical elite and the Jewish community.

The Archbishop defined Jedwabne as a violation of sacred moral law. "The commandment we share with the Jews says, 'Thou shalt not kill.' We must admit that we did not keep this commandment."³³⁶ The commandment also applied to "every act of indifference or harm in relation to Jews or anyone else."³³⁷ The scope of the law's violation, according to the archbishop, was far greater than the perpetrators and the bystanders. It implied and encompassed a large portion of society who remained indifferent to the visible plight of their Jewish neighbours, and for this, morality required of Polish society an attempt at atonement.

Muszyński's suggested process of expiation challenged the fundamental principles in Glemp's approach. Muszyński first sought unconditional collective recognition of the crime. He then proposed a means of reconciliation that asked for

³³⁶ Adam Boniecki and Michał Okoński. "A poor Christian looks at Jedwabne: Adam Boniecki and Michał Okoński talk with Archbishop Henryk Muszyński: *Tygodnik Powszechny*. 25 Mar. 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. Antony Polonsky and Joanna Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 162.

³³⁷ *Ibid.* 160.

forgiveness not only from God – as Glemp intended to do – but also from the victims affected by the crime.

The first stage was that of full and collective recognition.

This is for us a great challenge: to be capable of acknowledging and saying exactly the same thing about the joint responsibility or even the shared guilt of those Poles who in point of fact took part in the crimes. Without this recognition, the cleansing of memory that we have talked about so often lately cannot happen.³³⁸

Recognition prepared the path to truth, which would allow Poles to stand before God in honesty.³³⁹ However, truth was more than just the recognition of the crime.

According to Muszyński, forgiveness was key in living in communion with God.

“We say to God every day, ‘Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.’”³⁴⁰ The act of giving and seeking forgiveness allowed man to participate in God’s infinite love. This quest did not begin with the Almighty. “[R]econciliation with God [was] always achieved through reconciliation with another person.”³⁴¹ In other words, “[t]o receive God’s forgiveness, everyone who has committed a crime or a sin against another must stand in the full truth before mankind as well.”³⁴²

Members of the Jewish community were quite eager to support the liberal clerical elite. The most significant support came from Rabbi Michael Schudrich, the chief Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź. His approach to collective or moral responsibility differed in reasoning than those of Życiński, Pieronek, and Muszyński. He accepted collective culpability as a moral function of the present. Responsibility resided with the community

³³⁸ Adam Boniecki and Michał Okoński. “A poor Christian looks at Jedwabne: Adam Boniecki and Michał Okoński talk with Archbishop Henryk Muszyński: *Tygodnik Powszechny*. 25 Mar. 2001.” *Neighbours Respond*. 158.

³³⁹ *Ibid.* 162.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 158.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.* 161.

³⁴² *Ibid.* 159.

closest to the killings as did the process of seeking forgiveness. Using this definition, Schudrich suggested a process of reconciliation based on forgiveness and compromise.

While Muszyński analyzed Jedwabne based on a moral violation of the Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus, Schudrich based his interpretation on the explanatory extension of these sacred laws as prescribed in the Book of Deuteronomy. As an illustration, he pointed to the law concerning murder by persons unknown. The law described a community's obligation upon finding a dead body within their space of authority. Though the killer was unknown, the law, nevertheless, prescribed that the community nearest to the murdered soul declare

‘Our hands did not shed this blood, nor were we witnesses to it. Absolve, O LORD, your people Israel, whom you redeemed; do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people Israel.’ Then they will be absolved of bloodguilt. So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, because you must do what is right in the sight of the LORD.³⁴³

The city, in the story, had to seek the forgiveness of God regardless who killed the person. Rather than defining responsibility across time, he focused his attention on the present and what the Polish community could morally do today to be “right in the sight of the LORD.”

In the case of Jedwabne, argued Schudrich, the killers were people of the Polish nation. The law was still pertinent, for it demonstrated the present responsibility of a community when faced with murder. Forgiveness was the first step in the process of reconciliation.

There is a shadow that falls upon us all. The person who committed the murders answers individually for the deed; however, someone else may ask for forgiveness...when

³⁴³ “Book of Deuteronomy. 21:7-9.” *Holy Bible*. The New Revised Standard Version. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990) 176.

someone commits a crime, everyone has a reason to feel shame and sorrow for what happened, and may ask for forgiveness.³⁴⁴

It would allow Poles to stand in truth before God. Thus, it measured a person's and a nation's relationship with the Lord.³⁴⁵

Reconciliation was more than just forgiveness. It also required understanding and compromise. Schudrich argued that “[i]f we, Jews, want Poles to feel and understand our pain, than we must understand and feel the pain of Poles.”³⁴⁶ The Rabbi realized that reconciliation would only occur if it included a mechanism to bridge the two parallel myths and memories that emerged since the end of the Second World War. Compromise provided him with this opportunity. He offered four statements of significant importance in an attempt to help Poles meet their moral obligations. Most of the statements reinforced a particular dominant stereotype and/or mythology.

In the first, he reinforced German orchestration of the Holocaust. “The Germans planned and realized the Holocaust from beginning to end in which also participated representatives of other nations...to accuse Poles of cooperating in the Holocaust is a sin.”³⁴⁷ Poles could, therefore, take comfort in knowing that the Germans remained primarily responsible for the Holocaust.

The second statement dealt with anti-Semitism. “Polish anti-Semitism is neither as bad as Jews say it is, nor as good as Poles like to think.”³⁴⁸ Here again, the Rabbi reassured Poles that anti-Semitism in Poland was not inherent in the Polish genetic make-

³⁴⁴ Bogumił Łoziński and Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz. “Myśl o następnym kroku.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 14 Mar. 2001: 20.; Bogumił Łoziński and Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz. “Jedwabne powinno być symbolem pojednania.” *Rzeczpospolita*. 14 Mar. 2001, 9 Sep. 2004

<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010314/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_4.html>.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

up. Reactionaries and rejectionists such as Macierewicz and Stefanek commonly employed this belief. They argued that Jews regularly accused Poles of inherent anti-Semitism, something they got from their mother's milk.

The third compromise involved the commemorative service held by the Church. Whereas Jewish tradition called to have prayer services for the dead at the site of their burial, in this case the town of Jedwabne, Rabbi Schudrich was open to alternative proposals. He demonstrated considerable cultural and religious flexibility to accommodate the Primate's political unwillingness to meet in Jedwabne.

The final compromise sought to equate Jews with Poles as both victims and victimizers. "A person must ask for forgiveness for every committed sin, which is also the responsibility of every Jew. We must realize that we were not only victims, but we had among us bad people who hurt others."³⁴⁹ In this context, he acknowledged responsibility over those Jews who participated in communist organizations. "For us, a Jew is always a Jew. It is written in the Talmud. Even if a Jew sins, abandons faith, for better or for worse, he is still a Jew even if he thinks otherwise."³⁵⁰ This acknowledgement was a very important concession. It encouraged a Polish stereotype that maintained Jewish responsibility for communism and the country's forty-nine years of suppression. Ultimately, Schudrich reinforced a mythological narrative of Polish victimhood. The intent was to demonstrate the Jewish capacity to understand Polish perceptions and accept Polish versions of World War and post-war history, but the effect was considerably different as later demonstrated by Glemp's second statement.

³⁴⁹ Bogumił Łoziński and Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz. "Myśl o następnym kroku." *Gazeta Wyborcza*; Bogumił Łoziński and Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz. "Jedwabne powinno być symbolem pojednania." *Rzeczpospolita*.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

The Rabbi's approach to responsibility and reconciliation was very practical in its analysis. He employed common scripture to provide definition and guidance for the Polish community. Schudrich additionally introduced a new component into the discourse, that of compromise. Reconciliation was a two-way process in which both sides required making concessions in order to encourage a healthy dialogue.

The Polish Council of Christian and Jews,³⁵¹ co-chaired by Father Michał Czajkowski, represented the extreme variation of liberalism in the Christian religious community. The Council is a non-governmental organization involved in promoting a better and deeper religious and cultural understanding between Christianity and Judaism. Its influence derived from its various yearly events, such as the co-organization of the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church, and its individual members within the Church establishment. The organization was very critical of conservative ideology during the Jedwabne Affair. Especially in response to the Primate's address, the Council under the direction of Czajkowski challenged the Church hierarchy on the issue of anti-Semitism and the Church's intended absence at the 60th commemorative anniversary.

Jedwabne, for Czajkowski, was deeper than the question of responsibility. This was a fundamental reflection of Polish morality and a challenge to society's Christian values. "This is about something deeper. It is about ascertaining who we really are as Christians. Unfortunately, many still identify attempts to study and uncover the truth as attacks on the Church and the nation."³⁵² The study, to which he referred, included an analysis of the role of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitic propaganda, Czajkowski continued, weakened the faith and soul of Polish Christians, and gave way to such crimes as

³⁵¹ <http://prchiz.free.ngo.pl/index.html>

³⁵² Jan Halbersztat. "Ks. Czajkowski: Dobrze, że dyskusja o Jedwabnem się toczy – tylko prawda wyzwala." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 20 Apr. 2001: 8.

Jedwabne. He subsequently criticized the right for using nationalism as a means to undermine this process.³⁵³

Czajkowski's approach was unique in that he advocated this view as part of an organization that spoke on behalf of several influential individuals. Through the Council, Czajkowski issued two statements. The first sought forgiveness and demanded the Church take responsibility for all sinful deeds of man.³⁵⁴ The second, of greater significance, was an open letter that called for unity, prayer, and the presence of all at the 60th commemorative anniversary in Jedwabne. The letter also criticized the individualists, in particular the Church, for posturing.³⁵⁵ Commonly employed by such conservative clergy as Orłowski, Stefanek, and Glemp, the slogan "let us pray" really intended to say, "Germans, accept the blame. We are unable to carry it."³⁵⁶ The Church did not possess the capacity to fulfil its mandate that was to always seek penance for the sins of God's people.³⁵⁷ Its unwillingness to assume responsibility, and its strategic absence from the ceremony placed doubt in the hierarchy's approach to the genuine intention of reconciliation. In other words, according to Czajkowski, the Church failed in its divinely appointed mission.

Many prominent individuals endorsed this letter, by which it became another tool used to pressure the Church hierarchy. Aside from Czajkowski and his co-chair Stanisław Krajewski, Jacek Kuroń, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, and Henryk Wujec endorsed and

³⁵³ Jan Halbersztat. "Ks. Czajkowski: Dobrze, że dyskusja o Jedwabnem się toczy – tylko prawda wyzwala." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁵⁴ "O łasce skruchy: pojednania." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 Apr. 2001: 2.

³⁵⁵ "Do żydów w Jedwabnem." *Rzeczpospolita*. 13 Apr. 2001.; "Do żydów w Jedwabnem." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 13 Apr. 2001: 2.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Jan Halbersztat. "Ks. Czajkowski: Dobrze, że dyskusja o Jedwabnem się toczy – tylko prawda wyzwala." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

signed the letter. These three signatures carried considerable symbolic power. Kuroń and Nowak-Jeziorański were not only outspoken and instrumental supporters of the moralist approach as previously described, but they also enjoyed considerable public and political prestige, authority, and influence. Like the other two, Wujec belonged to the influential. Imprisoned under Martial Law, he eventually became a Member of Parliament from 1989-2001. This letter, thus, presented formidable pressure and implicit criticism of the Primate and his approach.

One more group of individuals participated in the growing liberal movement. Konstanty Gebert (also known as Dawid Warszawski) and Marek Beylin, both reporters for the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, offered a distinct perspective that demonstrated and reflected some of the internal divisions among liberal collectivist mentality. The two critics subscribed to the notion of collective responsibility, but differed in their analysis of the Primate's statements. Gebert considered Glemp's words ambiguous, sophistic, and rhetorical. Beylin believed them to be the beginning of an accounting with Polish identity.

Collective responsibility was intrinsic to a society that established its existence based on links that solidified a common identity. Individuals did not live in isolation of this process, but played integral roles in its creation, formulation, and manipulation. Individuals created societies, and societies helped form individuals. The actions of the individual, thus, reflected upon the collective that helped to shape that person's identity. In lieu of this dependent *liason* and in context of Jedwabne, Gebert argued that the Polish nation did not perpetrate the crime itself. Ultimate responsibility was that of the killers,

but the Polish nation did create these criminals, and they committed their deeds in the light of day convinced that the nation understands and approves. Today, we all who feel

connected to Poland answer to and for this very thing; because in democratic Poland, it is society that is the nation.³⁵⁸

For Beylin, responsibility resided in the present manipulation of Polish identity rather than the bonds between the past and present. “We do not have a tradition of speaking about our collective faults...it is an element of Polish culture, and for it, we all carry some part of the responsibility.”³⁵⁹ At this juncture, Gebert’s and Beylin’s interpretations parted. Though both recognized the important relationship between the individual and the community, they had considerably different views of the Primate’s attempt to address this question of accountability and reconciliation.

Gebert considered Glemp’s conditional moral approach to responsibility as ambiguous. The Primate did recognize the killings as a Polish perpetration; however, he did not state the moral imperative: “We have to tell the criminals after 60 years that they are not we and that we will not be them. And in this case, there cannot be any ambiguity.”³⁶⁰ Gebert’s vision of Polish society included a very definite moral position of such Polish examples as demonstrated by the Jedwabne crime. His moral vision demanded the condemnation of such behaviour, individual and collective, that permitted events like Jedwabne to occur. The idea was to generate a moral society of tolerance and respect, and most importantly, honesty and truth. Hence, he called upon all Polish leaders of authority, especially the Primate, to illustrate this Polish capacity for exceptional righteous morality.

I want for Polish dignitaries – the Primate who is the head of the Church, is a Polish dignitary – to speak about Jedwabne in honesty and truth without sophistry and rhetoric, so that this manner of language becomes something natural, obvious, universal, without

³⁵⁸ Dawid Warszawski. “Mowa pokutna.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 9 Mar. 2001: 18.

³⁵⁹ Marek Beylin. “Mowa pokutna.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 9 Mar. 2001: 18.

³⁶⁰ Dawid Warszawski. “Mowa pokutna.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

feeling ashamed of my country, and never having to say those awful words, “that is not that bad for Poland.”³⁶¹

Beylin had a somewhat different interpretation of the Primate’s address. Most notably, he believed that Glemp’s recognition and apology would force all those who feel connected with the Church to “reject the traditional and widespread idea of a guiltless nation.”³⁶² To a large extent, this prediction held true. Orłowski, Stefanek, and the extremist Jankowski all admitted that Poles participated in the killing of the Jedwabne Jews. In this context, Glemp’s position had a monumental affect in changing stereotypes and mythic beliefs. Jedwabne was truly a huge shock to the Polish narrative of victimhood. Because of this impact on Polish mentality, Beylin believed that the Primate’s initiative was the beginning of a process to create a vision of a tolerant and just society, free of hatred and violence.

I dream of a country in which everyone would feel safe, in every place, regardless of their appearance, the colour of their skin, and their customs. There does not exist such a Poland...we live in a civilization with layered and inherited warnings and aggressions toward the “other.” I do not see another chance to root these things out other than through a persistent, painful accounting with ourselves, with our traditions, with our nation. The Primate, among others, took this work upon himself, and for that, I bow my head.³⁶³

Beylin’s belief in the Primate’s genuine intentions to pursue reconciliation proved to be just a dream. Gebert’s fears of “sophistry and rhetoric” fundamentally exemplified Glemp’s approach. The Primate’s vision was not that of either of the two critics. It was one that maintained traditional antagonisms, stereotypes, and myths based on the politics of power and not the moral convictions of faith.

³⁶¹ Dawid Warszawski. “Mowa pokutna.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁶² Marek Beylin. “Mowa pokutna.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

The Second Statement by Primate Józef Glemp – A conservative victory

On May 2, 2001, the Polish Episcopate held a plenary session to discuss Glemp's proposal of an alternative commemorative service of reconciliation. There was not much to decide over the fundamental aspect of the apology. The growing Christian collectivists and moralists and their political pressure ensured a favourable response, so the unresolved question remained the method rather than the plausibility of an apology. By this time, divisions within the Church community had considerably deepened. The plenary session of the Episcopate, therefore, represented a very important moment that would formalize the preference of one vision over the other by the collective Polish bishopric. The Episcopate's response coupled with Glemp's subsequent interview identified a preference of identities that favoured a conservative interpretation of reconciliation. The bishops wanted "to apologize for all evil that was committed by Polish citizens against those of Mosaic faith,"³⁶⁴ "to God for the crime committed against Jews in Jedwabne and other places,"³⁶⁵ and "to ask forgiveness of everyone who suffered...we want this prayer to be profound, and to contain a genuine apology to God and to people."³⁶⁶ The Episcopate and Glemp framed this intent within a series of circumstances and conditions that questioned the hierarchy's sincerity. The Primate presented the apology as forced, driven by political pressure and an anti-Polish campaign designed to attack the Church. As for his approach to reconciliation, Glemp rejected and even extorted the terms of compromise offered by Rabbi Schudrich who suggested them as a basis for a constructive Polish-Jewish dialogue. The Primate did not appear

³⁶⁴ "Za winy nasze i winy wasze." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ Bogumił Łoziński, et al. "Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. 167.

interested in a genuine rapprochement between Poles and Jews. He and the Episcopate outlined an apology conditioned on terms that satisfied only Polish conservative ideology.

Glemp began his justification and explanation of the Episcopate's decision by separating the Church apology from its secular counterpart led by the Polish President. He simply re-iterated his earlier statement in this regard. "In my view, ideology or politics motivates the suggestions that have been made that we apologize exclusively for Jedwabne."³⁶⁷ For the Primate, the apology was not about reconciliation. It was a demonstration of Church sovereignty, a political statement of independence from State authority. He even went as far as to question the President's legitimacy as an elected official and Head of State. "I think that President Kwaśniewski does not have the formal authority to apologize in the name of the nation."³⁶⁸ The very fact that Glemp challenged the President's authority and derided his political initiatives to address the Jedwabne Affair demonstrated the Primate's own political interests in elevating the supremacy, authority, and legitimacy of the Church establishment vis-à-vis the moral issues surrounding Jedwabne. The Church apology was, thus, as much a politically and ideologically motivated act as its counterpart within the secular world.

Glemp also contextualized the apology in terms of an anti-Polish campaign. "[W]e are witnessing a campaign of harassment against the Church to apologize for Jedwabne."³⁶⁹ This statement was very similar to those made by Macierewicz and Stefanek. Both argued that Jedwabne was part of a two-pronged campaign: one led by

³⁶⁷ Bogumił Łoziński, et al. "Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. 166.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 171.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 166.

Polish liberals, and the other by the Jewish Holocaust Industry. The Cardinal, however, did not suggest a reason. Instead, he expressed perplexity.

I...cannot understand why Poles are unceasingly slandered, especially in the American press, and why we are constantly accused of anti-Semitism, as though it were somehow different in form from what it is in other countries. In all this Jews continually exhibit their dislike toward Poles. I cannot really understand why they do so.³⁷⁰

Such statements coming from the highest Church official in Poland perpetuated and further legitimized the reactionary and rejectionist belief in an orchestrated attack against the nation. Jews and others formulated a campaign of harassment that generated global anti-Polonism.

[A]nti-Polonism is worth mentioning. Here are a few clippings from newspapers, in particular American papers. These caricatures have been circulated all over the world in thousands of copies, misrepresenting the image of the Church and of Poland. And no one has apologized for that.³⁷¹

Czajkowski criticized this very mechanism used by the conservatives. Glemp employed anti-Polonism as a means to attack and question the national loyalties of all those who dared to challenge the Church, as well as the nation. He utilized an image that vilified the Jew blaming him for a global anti-Polish campaign while simultaneously attacking the collectivists' and moralists' sense of rightful belonging. Considering that the purpose of the ceremony was to reconcile Poles and Jews, Glemp contextualized the apology as having been forced by political interests and a campaign of harassment driven by Jews and the liberal establishment.

The Church hierarchy, the Episcopate and the Primate, also rejected the terms of compromise suggested by Schudrich. Rabbi Schudrich offered terms of reconciliation that would permit for both sides, for Poles and Jews, to meet somewhere in mutual

³⁷⁰ Bogumił Łoziński, et al. "Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga." *Rzeczpospolita*; "Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych." *Gazeta Wyborcza*; "Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. 170.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

understanding. He suggested that anti-Semitism in Poland was not as bad as Jews claimed; he demonstrated flexibility with the location of the service; and he assumed responsibility over the Jewish members of the Communist Party. Instead, the Church extorted the Rabbi's concessions, and demanded an apology in return, while using Jewish responsibility as a means to expand the base of victims for the apology thereby mitigating Polish moral responsibility.

In describing Polish-Jewish relations, Glemp portrayed the Jew as a wily and cunning capitalist who knew "how to take advantage of Poles."³⁷² Though capitalist, Jews were also communists with "their pro-Bolshevik attitude. This was a very basic resentment."³⁷³ Another reason why Poles did not like Jews was for their religion characterized by "their odd 'folk customs.'"³⁷⁴ He went on to criticize publicly Czajkowski for his open debate on present anti-Semitism especially within the Church.

I think that Father Michał Czajkowski has made things much worse in this discussion by his constant imputation of anti-Semitism to the Church and to the hierarchy, which supposedly arises from dislike toward Jews based on religious beliefs. I have not noted any dislike for the Jewish faith nor have I ever noticed any such phenomenon as anti-Judaism. That is all in the past.³⁷⁵

Regardless of whether anti-Semitism in Poland was traditional based on religious beliefs or modern based on political-ideological forms, the Primate's use of language in describing Polish-Jewish relations illustrated Czajkowski's point. Anti-Semitism was still a problem in the Catholic Church. Aside from such extreme examples as Jankowski – the parish priest who blamed the Jews for Christ's crucifixion – or the more popular radio priest Rydyk, anti-Semitic attitudes remained concealed, embedded, and present in the

³⁷² Bogumił Łoziński, et al. "Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. 167.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 170.

minds of the Church hierarchy. Glemp did not perceive his understanding of Polish-Jewish relations as being intertwined with anti-Semitic beliefs, and his consistent denial resulted in the rejection of Rabbi Schudrich's attempt to engage the Church on this very issue.

The second compromise rejected by the Episcopate and Primate was the location of the service. As the Rabbi stated, in Jewish tradition, commemorative prayers for the dead were normally said at the location of their burial. Out of consideration for previous statements made by Glemp, the political sensitivity faced by the Church, Schudrich conceded and agreed to having the religious commemorative service held in Warsaw. "The rabbi suggested that we meet on 10 July in the synagogue in Warsaw, if we could not meet in Jedwabne. However, July is not the most suitable month for such a ceremony, and many bishops would not be able to be present,"³⁷⁶ stated Glemp. Rather than having the ceremony in a synagogue at all, the Episcopate decided that it would take place on May 27, 2001 at All Saints' Church.³⁷⁷ The church was symbolic for its location and role during World War Two. Because it bordered closely to the Warsaw Ghetto, the church served as a transfer point for food for Jews and a smuggling point through which Jewish children escaped the Ghetto.³⁷⁸ However, in recent times, All Saints' Church developed a reputation of promoting anti-Semitic literature by selling questionable material in their church bookstore. The publications disappeared off the shelves after a public statement to

³⁷⁶ Bogumił Łoziński, et al. "Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. 168.

³⁷⁷ "Za winy nasze i winy wasze." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; Ewa Czaczkowska. "Biskupi przepraszają Boga za zło w Jedwabnem." *Rzeczpospolita*. 4 May 2001, 9 Sep. 2004
<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010504/kraj/kraj_a_7.html>.

³⁷⁸ Bogumił Łoziński, et al. "Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. 168.

that effect by Rabbi Schudrich.³⁷⁹ Furthermore, the date of the ceremony coincided with the anniversary death of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, a former Polish Primate, in whose honour the Episcopate had already planned a ceremony that same weekend. The date chosen for the Jedwabne service was out of convenience for the Episcopate who would not have to organize another event in July and for the convenience of the bishops who would not have to sacrifice summer plans.³⁸⁰ Moreover, the Episcopate did not consult with Rabbi Schudrich. As such, May 27th being the Jewish holiday of Shavuot – the passing of the Torah and the Ten Commandments from God to Moses – the Rabbi was unable to attend.³⁸¹ The Episcopate refused Schudrich's compromise in its entirety, and chose a location of contradictory symbolism and a date that effectively excluded Jewish participation.

Finally and most significantly, the Church took advantage of the third compromise, that of Jewish responsibility over members of communist organizations. Instead of using this as a bridge to dialogue, the Episcopate, supported by Glemp, demanded an apology for Jewish communist crimes against the Polish people.

We wonder whether Jews should not acknowledge that they have a burden of responsibility in regard to Poles, in particular for the period of close cooperation with the Bolsheviks, for complicity in deportations to Siberia, for sending Poles to jails, for the degradation of many of their fellow citizens, etc... These victims also need to be considered, as long as we are speaking about Jews victimized by Poles.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ Agnieszka Kublik. "Duże i małe powody odmowy: Modlitwa bez rabina." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 22 May 2001: 5.

³⁸⁰ Stanisław Musiał. "Prosimy, pomóżcie nam być lepszymi." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 21 May 2001: 24.; "We ask you to help us be better," *The Neighbours Respond*. Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). 173.

³⁸¹ Agnieszka Kublik. "Duże i małe powody odmowy: Modlitwa bez rabina." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁸² Bogumił Łoziński, et al. "Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga." *Rzeczpospolita*.; "Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001." *Neighbours Respond*. 170.

“I expect that the Jewish side will account for its conscience and will apologize to Poles for these crimes.”³⁸³ The Church hierarchy used Schudrich’s compromise as leverage to support the idea of an apology in return from the Jews. This approach and argumentation originated within conservative ideology that first sought to deny Polish responsibility and then a bartered negotiation for the apology: “I will apologize if you apologize.”³⁸⁴

The Church also utilized this concession as a means to broaden the ethnic scope of the apology to reinforce Glemp’s interpretation of morality based on conditional responsibility. All that historians knew, according to Glemp, was “the basic issue: there were people in Jedwabne who caused the death of their fellow citizens.”³⁸⁵ As outlined by his moral framework, which coincidentally provided the conservatives with official authority and legitimacy to question Polish responsibility and the moral applicability, the Polish moral response to Jedwabne depended on the extent of Polish involvement within the crime. “[W]e should note that in some way, Germans, Poles, Jews, and Russians were all entangled in it. We will not be confessing these sins ‘blindly’; we want to see them precisely in this broad context. That is, to abide in truth.”³⁸⁶ Based on this belief, that Poles were not solely responsible for the Jedwabne crime, that Germans, Russians, and Jews each had a part to play, the “[b]ishops will be apologizing to God for the great acts of hatred that brought human pain.”³⁸⁷ “[B]ecause we acknowledge our faults, and the faults of those four aforementioned nations, we say that this is a deformation of human

³⁸³ “Za winy nasze i winy wasze.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

³⁸⁴ See Chapter 3 – The State Response.

³⁸⁵ Bogumił Łoziński, et al. “Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga.” *Rzeczpospolita*.; “Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; “Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001.” *Neighbours Respond*. 169.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 166.

³⁸⁷ “Przeprosimy i czekamy na przeprosiny.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 4 May 2001: 4.

beings as creatures of God in general.”³⁸⁸ What began as an apology from Poles to Jews, it had now become a general admission on behalf of four nations condemning evil and seeking forgiveness only from God. By speaking in the name of multiple parties, not as Catholics or Christians but as nations, he not only mitigated Polish responsibility as he did in his first address, but he also assigned the Church the right to apportion blame and responsibility on other nationalities. The focus of the apology had shifted from reconciliation to the attribution and disbursement of culpability upon everyone. In all this, the Church remained separate, independent, and isolated from society. This admission remained silent on the role of the Church. Jedwabne was a product of evil by various nations, but the Church retained its innocence. This was all part of a pattern of both Glemp and the Episcopate to cater to its conservative base that felt forced into the apology.

The Church hierarchy expressed serious interest in reconciliation, but their justification and their rejection and extortion of Rabbi Schudrich’s efforts for compromise seriously questioned the sincerity of the apology. Glemp contextualized the apology as something forced upon the Church by politicians and an anti-Polish campaign organized by Jews set out to discredit the country. He further went on to reject the terms of compromise set out by Schudrich, promoting the individualist reactionary and rejectionist ideology including anti-Semitic beliefs and limited moral responsibility. The Church had made its position quite clear. Rather than curbing the conservatives, who most commonly operated “[u]nder the Catholic shield...[and] have been the loudest

³⁸⁸ Bogumił Łoziński, et al. “Przeprosimy przede wszystkim Boga.” *Rzeczpospolita*; “Przeprosić Boga i pokrzywdzonych.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*; “Interview with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, on the Murder of Jews in Jedwabne, 15 May 2001.” *Neighbours Respond*. 171.

deniers of Polish co-responsibility,³⁸⁹ the Episcopate and the Primate perpetuated and supported the Church as a bastion establishment of conservatism.

The Second Response – A last attempt to change the apology

The divide intensified between the conservatives and the liberals from the fallout of the Episcopal announcement and Glemp's subsequent justification. The reactionaries and rejectionists considered the apology as a betrayal of the Polish nation. Represented by the nationalist-Catholic newspaper *Nasz Dziennik* founded by Rydzyk, the apology embodied submission to the "influence of Jewish lobby groups,"³⁹⁰ that it emboldened these groups to "slander, blackmail, provoke, and insult the nation,"³⁹¹ that those who represent Poles verged on losing the nation's "honour, pride, a sense of dignity...[and] decency."³⁹² From the collectivists and moralists, *Gazeta Wyborcza* Christian commentator and theologian, Jan Turnau criticized the Church for violating the examples set by Pope John Paul II who never sought an apology in return.³⁹³ The Episcopate, thus, found itself increasingly caught between two publicly distinctive factions. On one side, the Church contended with the far views of *Nasz Dziennik*, Macierewicz, Jankowski, Orłowski, Stefanek, and the more moderate but still conservative Glemp. On the other end of the spectrum, the Church had Bortnowska, Wilkanowicz, Życiński, Pieronek, Muszyński, and Czajkowski, including supportive Jewish representatives such as Schudrich and Gebert. From Glemp's interview to the commemorative service, there was

³⁸⁹ Andrzej Kaczyński. "Więcej niż przeprosiny." *Rzeczpospolita*. 4 May 2001, 9 Sep. 2004
<http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010504/kraj/kraj_a_7.html>.

³⁹⁰ Michał Czajkowski. "Czysta nierządnicza." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 26-27 May 2001: 19.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ Jan Turnau. "Styl przeprosin." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 4 May 2001: 1.

still sufficient time to exert influence upon the character of the apology. At this critical juncture, Stanisław Musiał and Michał Czajkowski played crucial roles in challenging the original Episcopal terms of the apology. Musiał provided the definition of sincerity, while Czajkowski defined moral truth. Their contributions, together with those of Życiński, Pieronek, and Muszyński, changed the spirit of the service.

In response to the question of sincerity in Glemp's interview and in the Episcopate's announcement, Musiał introduced a framework for a genuine or sincere apology. Because the hierarchy chose to apologize to God, "[t]he organizers are surely aware that a prayer composed for this occasion has to be crystalline-sincere and pure... It should be completely free of all ambivalences, subtexts, searches for extenuating circumstances, and blaming 'the other side.'"³⁹⁴ The risk in doing otherwise, as Pieronek commented earlier and Musiał reiterated, would result in "a new sin – profanation of the name of God."³⁹⁵ Not only would Poles be liable for violating the Commandment not to kill but also for the "wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name."³⁹⁶ To secure a real sincere apology that did not violate another moral law, Musiał outlined three necessary conditions.

The first condition was an examination of conscience.

It would be too bad if the Church limited itself to an apology for the sins of its sons and daughters. The Church in Poland should also apologize...for its own sins, for the sins of the institution that it itself is. For it is not that the sins of the sons and daughters of the Church stemmed only from their disobedience to the teachings of the Church. Many of those sins, which we group under the name "anti-Semitism," came about from faithfulness to the teaching of the Church at that time and to the generally accepted norms

³⁹⁴ Stanisław Musiał. "Prosimy, pomóżcie nam być lepszymi." *Gazeta Wyborcza*; "We ask you to help us be better," *The Neighbours Respond*. 174.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 175.

³⁹⁶ "The Book of Exodus. 20:7." *Holy Bible*. New Revised Standard Version. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989) 66.

of behaviour against which the Church did not protest, despite the fact that some of them were highly immoral.³⁹⁷

The Church had to conduct a self-examination of its own role, its own activities within the development of collective society, for the Church was not distinct or separate or independent of the whole. The institution was part of the evolution of society's history, culture, and obviously religion. It, therefore, had considerable influence over the shape of communities and societies. Musiał desired the Polish Church to reassess its own involvement and not just the actions of its children, but this was his own personal preference. In either case, the first condition required an honest examination of Polish perpetration in the Jedwabne killings and similar such acts within the region.

The second condition was that of disinterestedness. This element reflected Turnau's earlier criticism and directly challenged the idea of a bartered apology.

It cannot take the form of bargaining: "I am ready to forgive you, if you also forgive me." Such huckstering of moral acts should be completely alien to Christianity, which is founded on the salvation freely given by God – on Divine grace that is prior to our please that our trespasses be forgiven.³⁹⁸

To demand an apology from Jews for communism and bolshevism in return for one for Jedwabne was a betrayal of the founding teachings of Christ. The act had to be of free volition, given freely without expectations or ulterior intentions.

Finally, in order that an apology not be empty words, and that it be effective – that is, that it successfully reach God as well as the injured parties – it must be closely accompanied by a firm purpose of amendment. That purpose needs to be evident not only in theological-moral discussions but above all in the prose of everyday life.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ Stanisław Musiał. "Prosimy, pomóżcie nam być lepszymi." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; "We ask you to help us be better," *The Neighbours Respond*. 175.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 176.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 177.

It was simply not enough to apologize. The Church also had to commit to rectifying the ill within the institution, as well as among the parishioners through dialogue and education in a theoretical and demonstrative capacity.

An apology that failed to meet these three components, an examination of conscience, disinterestedness, and a promise of amendment, was not by definition sincere or genuine. The approach proposed by the Episcopate and Primate verged on blasphemy of God's moral laws. The Polish Church would then have to contend with two major sins, the killings in Jedwabne and the "profanation of the name of God."

Czajkowski's criticism, like that of Musiał's, stemmed from Glemp's preoccupation with assigning fault, blame, and responsibility rather than a process of forgiveness and unity. In response, Czajkowski helped to focus the debate by dividing moral acts into two components. The approach was unique in that he placed aside the issue of responsibility and fault as something completely and exclusively in the realm of God's authority. Instead, he narrowed the context of the apology to moral law and its process of redemption.

Czajkowski defined moral truth as the state of salvation achieved through moral acts. "To confide our past in full truth to the good gracious God, we must admit fault and ask for forgiveness. And that is how cleansing becomes salvation. 'You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free' (John 8:32)." This was the essence of Christian morality. Because of the bond offered through Christ, "all of us...bear the burden of the errors and faults of those who have gone before us' (John Paul II, *Incarnationis mysterium*,

11).”⁴⁰⁰ As such, the Church although “‘holy because of her incorporation into Christ...does not tire of doing penance: before God and man *she always acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters*’ (John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente*. 33).”⁴⁰¹

Admitting fault and seeking forgiveness rested at the heart of Christian cleansing.

Cleansing consisted of moral acts, according to Czajkowski, which he divided into two components: subjective and objective. The subjective element dealt with fault and the responsibility of the malefactor. Though the collective and the Church had to admit its faults and seek forgiveness, it was not personally responsible, for this would encroach, in the words of John Paul II, upon “‘the judgement of God who alone knows every heart.’”⁴⁰² “God is the only judge here.”⁴⁰³ Glemp and the Episcopate preoccupied themselves too much with assigning blame and responsibility rather than penance and forgiveness. The Lord God exclusively reserved the right of this subjective component of a moral act. By blaming the Germans, Soviets, and the Jews, expecting an apology in return, the Church hierarchy infringed on God’s superior authority. The Primate and the Polish Episcopate suffered from pride claiming power that solely belonged to God. The apology should not, therefore, in any form lay blame or responsibility upon anyone other than the obligation required of the second component of moral acts.

⁴⁰⁰ Michał Czajkowski. “Czysta nierządnicą.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 26-27 May 2001: 19.; John Paul II. *Incarnationis mysterium*. 11. 12 Apr. 2006 <http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/docs/documents/hf_jp-ii_doc_30111998_bolla-jubilee_en.html>.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*; John Paul II. *Tertio millennio adveniente*. 33. 12 Apr. 2006. <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html>.

⁴⁰² Michał Czajkowski. “Czysta nierządnicą.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.; John Paul II. *Incarnationis mysterium*. 11.

⁴⁰³ Michał Czajkowski. “Czysta nierządnicą.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Moral actions were also quantifiable in objective terms defined by compliance with moral law.⁴⁰⁴ “And here human judgement, our judgement is most appropriately applied. Evil deeds committed by Christians must be the topic of moral judgement and pleas for forgiveness.”⁴⁰⁵ Given the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, God gave man the capacity and responsibility to determine violations of His laws. Judging a breach of God’s commandments, the individual and the Church, united through the Mystical Body of Christ irrespective of time and place, required the seeking of forgiveness. This process, the ability to identify and judge the defiance of Divine law and its associated act of expiation, defined the objective aspect of moral acts for which man bore responsibility. Taking ownership of this process brought man and Church closer to moral truth, to redemption and salvation.⁴⁰⁶

Czajkowski criticized the Church for its negligence in its responsibility to frame the apology in terms that reflected the Pope’s teachings of moral expiations. John Paul II’s statements offered insight into moral acts of forgiveness, which Czajkowski utilized to define its structure. The apology, as proposed by the Church, laid out all the conditions of blame and assigned responsibility to various ethnicities, but failed to address the very essence of Christianity on earth as embodied within the component that man controlled – the judgement of moral law and the process of cleansing through forgiveness. Together, Musiał and Czajkowski fundamentally and theologically challenged the Church hierarchy. Through their criticisms, they offered a framework to ensure a genuine apology that was simultaneously a moral act within the realm of control of humanity. The

⁴⁰⁴ Michał Czajkowski. “Czysta nierządnicą.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

conglomerate effect of these two critics and the other representatives and supporters of the liberal movement within the Church community influenced a significant shift in Church policy.

The Commemorative/Requiem Service

The requiem service took place in All Saints' Church in Warsaw on May 27, 2001. The Episcopate, led by Primate Glemp, gathered in prayer and expressed grief, sorrow, and repentance for the evil of Jedwabne and other places. "As pastors of the Church in Poland, we want to stand in truth before God and people, especially before our Jewish brothers and sisters, regarding our sorrow and repentance of the crime that occurred in July 1941 in Jedwabne and elsewhere."⁴⁰⁷ The apology was very different in tone than that initially expressed by the Episcopate and Primate. The apology was an attempt to reach a delicate political balance between the conservative and liberal ideologies or visions of Polish identity. The conservative faction within the Church won over language. The Episcopate did not employ the word apology, nor did it technically ask for forgiveness. The language also perpetuated a belief in mitigated Polish responsibility premised on the involvement of other nationalities. However, the liberals prevailed in spirit. Its influence and argumentative prowess side-lined the reactionaries and rejectionists in the Church community, and generated an apology that in spirit met all the basic conditions of sincerity outlined by Musiał and the conditions for a moral act defined by Czajkowski.

⁴⁰⁷ Mikołaj Lizut and Jerzy Gumowski. "Episkopat przeprasza: skrucha za Jedwabne." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 28 May 2001: 1.

The first condition for a sincere apology called for an examination of the conscience. The Episcopate and Glemp had always acknowledged Polish perpetration of the crime committed in Jedwabne; however, they contextualized Polish perpetration in relation to the Germans, Soviets, and the Jews. Glemp specifically presented Polish responsibility and society's moral obligation as conditional based on this multi-national comparison. The Primate, in his second interview, was quite adamant that the Church admission would include all these nationalities, for in his assessment, this represented the historical truth. The apology, in fact, did not mention any other nationality other than the Poles, though there remained implication that Poles were not the sole perpetrators.

The victims of this crime were Jews, while the perpetrators included Poles and Catholics, people who had been baptized. The atrocity of this crime is still greater for the fact that under National Socialism, the Jewish nation, which received the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' from God, experienced their killing in great magnitude – as Pope John Paul II put it in his homily in Auschwitz... We grieve deeply at the wrongs committed by those who through the ages, especially in Jedwabne and elsewhere caused the Jews to suffer and even brought about their deaths.⁴⁰⁸

The implication that among the perpetrators were other nationalities reflected the belief and language of the conservatives who, like Glemp, refused to accept sole Polish responsibility. The language used also referred to German responsibility as "National Socialism" and equated various ethnic atrocities, including Katyń, Auschwitz, Kołyma,⁴⁰⁹ and Jedwabne. Nevertheless, the spirit of the statement expressed through great grief emphasized Polish perpetration alone and, in essence, moral and collective responsibility. Naming Jedwabne along side of Auschwitz, Musiał later argued, was even appropriate because Jedwabne had become the new name of the Holocaust.⁴¹⁰ The intent projected and perceived was that of a sincere examination of the Polish conscience, one that

⁴⁰⁸ Mikołaj Lizut and Jerzy Gumowski. "Episkopat przeprosza: skrucha za Jedwabne." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

⁴⁰⁹ A Soviet labour death camp in which the Soviets interned many Polish political prisoners.

⁴¹⁰ Stanisław Musiał. "Jedwabne to nowe imię holokaustu." *Rzeczpospolita*. 10 July 2001, 9 Sep. 2004 <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_010710/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_6.html>.

recognized and admitted its role and culpability as part of the greater unity inherent in the Mystical Body of Christ. Concomitantly, backing away from ascribing responsibility unto others, the Church left the subjective element of this moral act to God. The apology ceased to be about blame and became one in spirit seeking forgiveness.

The apology was also silent on expectations. Because it did not attribute blame, as both the Episcopate and Glemp did in the beginning of May, the confession met the second criteria of sincerity. The very significant shift in the tone of the apology from its initial formulation demonstrated a considerable change in mentality and attitude. The Episcopate's overall reconsideration of its planned confession exhibited a genuine desire of an apology that was freely given. Even the language employed illustrated sincerity without expectation. The Church freely expressed its "sorrow and repentance of the crime" and their grief for the "wrongs committed by those who through the ages, especially in Jedwabne and elsewhere caused the Jews to suffer and even brought about their deaths."⁴¹¹

Finally, a firm promise of amendment accompanied the apology. "We also refer to this crime with the intention that we may be able effectively to assume the responsibility for overcoming great evil present in the world today. For us, the effort of 'cleansing memory' becomes a difficult task of cleansing the conscience."⁴¹² With that, the Church issued through prayer an affirmation of condemnation of any ill will toward Jews as an immoral sin of hatred in violation of God's laws. "We...condemn all manifestations of intolerance, racism and anti-Semitism, which are obviously sins."⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Mikołaj Lizut and Jerzy Gumowski. "Episkopat przeprosza: skrucha za Jedwabne." *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

This statement not only committed the Church to act on the issue of anti-Semitism, but it also sent a message to the conservatives indicating that much of their behaviour would no longer be tolerated within the Church community.

In spirit, the apology was a liberal success, though some of its language remained mitigated by conservative ideology. The admission did not ask for forgiveness, but having met the conditions of sincerity, it also met the conditions of a moral act. The Episcopate recognized the Jedwabne killings as a Polish violation of moral law. In response, the Church expressed its sorrow, repentance, and grief and committed itself to a cleansing of conscience. The requiem service, however, was not a mechanism that built unity between the divergent factions within the Church community. Though heralded as a victory in Polish-Jewish relations, it really symbolized the temporal success of liberal influence and argumentation.

In a review of the Jedwabne Affair, Musiał aptly wrote that a large portion of the centre and the right, using nationalistic slogans, negated or marginalized Polish perpetration labeling the offenders as marginal elements of society, bandits, and gangsters. They contextualized the crime employing conditional responsibility attributing blame to Germans, Soviets, and the Jews. The left, though much smaller, accepted the overall conclusions of Gross's research and expressed sorrow for what happened in the town. They saw Jedwabne as an opportunity to cleanse Polish myth and memory, and expressed a war with anti-Semitism. An honest accounting of the Polish conscience and a commitment of amendment would help improve the Polish democracy and mend its

image in the international community.⁴¹⁴

The Church stood as well on the brink of this kind of polarity. The liberals applied pressure to recognize and apologize for what transpired in Jedwabne. The Church, part of society, responsible for its Catholic membership, united across time by moral responsibility through the bonds and links generated by the transmission of values, morals, and history, as well as the theological component of the Mystical Body of Christ, had no other real choice but to accept responsibility and seek forgiveness. The reactionaries and rejectionists believed Jedwabne as another extension of the Holocaust Industry supported by Polish liberals. Under pressure, the Primate issued a response that accepted an apology on conditional terms and as a political tool to demonstrate Church sovereignty. He rejected participating in a State sponsored apology, and restricted the service exclusively to Warsaw. Furthermore, his conditions provided the conservatives with greater legitimacy and authority in their interpretation of the Jedwabne tragedy. Orłowski, Stefanek, and Jankowski continued to advocate their hostility toward a rapprochement with the Jewish community. Pieronek, Muszyński, and Czajkowski directly challenged the conservative model and framework of responsibility presented by Primate Glemp. To compromise, Rabbi Schudrich offered several points, which Glemp later rejected in their entirety or extorted as leverage for a Jewish apology. The Episcopate's initial announcement of the service reflected Glemp's conservatism, but within a few weeks, under liberal pressure, the Episcopate reformulated its policy and held a requiem service that in spirit embodied an apology and a plea of forgiveness. Only

⁴¹⁴ Stanisław Musiał. "Jedwabne to nowe imię holokaustu." *Rzeczpospolita*.

one-third of the Episcopate attended the service,⁴¹⁵ even though all bishops were expected to attend. Nevertheless, “we must positively acknowledge this act of repentance (nobody to that day had seen Polish bishops on their knees apologizing for the sins of Christians committed against the Jews).”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ Stanisław Musiał. “Jedwabne to nowe imię holokaustu.” *Rzeczpospolita*.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

In Poland a man must be one thing: white or black, here or there, with us or against us—clearly, openly, without hesitations.... We lack the liberal, democratic tradition rich in all its gradations. We have instead the tradition of struggle: the extreme situation, the final gesture.
- Ryszard Kapuściński (A Warsaw Diary)

Poland remains undzer heym, our home, no matter how bitter the memories, how filled with disappointment and betrayal. Amerike iz goles, America is exile, a foreign land in which I speak a foreign tongue. But I will never live in Poland. I do not want to, though I do not see an end to the mourning.
- Irena Klepfisz (Dreams of an Insomniac)

The Jedwabne controversy was the first attempt to self-examine the Polish nation since the fall of the communist regime. Its impact was extensive and profound, affecting numerous areas of Polish society. The reality of Polish actions in the town of Jedwabne forced the collective to re-evaluate its self-perception, mythology, and identity. Poles realized that there existed a gap between myths that identified the nation as innocent victims of German and Soviet hostility and the Polish organization, orchestration, and perpetration of a massacre of hundreds of Jewish men, women, children, and infants. The realization of this gap precipitated a crisis in meaning, in which the values of innocence, suffering, heroism, altruism, and righteousness were challenged. The idea of perpetual victimization no longer held true. Jedwabne demonstrated that Poles were also the victimizers involved in some of history's most horrific crimes against humanity. The shock to this mythology, and consequently its derived identity, instigated a nine-month national debate that sought to compensate and reinstate coherence back into the disorder sparked by the events of Jedwabne.

The response to the Jedwabne Affair varied by interpretation of Polish myth and visions of identity. The individualists, for example, believed that they were free from the limitations of society, that they alone could choose whether they would accept

responsibility by belonging to the collective. Consequently, their ideology gave those who did not want to accept collective responsibility an escape that allowed them to maintain their innocent vision of Polish actions during the Second World War. The collectivists argued otherwise, recognizing the existence of the collective as an inseparable union between the group and the person. The Polish community, both the collective and the individual, thus bore responsibility because of the bonds that bound it together in the present, as well as with the past and the future. They built their response around a vision of morality, progress, and Western belonging. The collectivists included two sub-groups: the moralists and the conditionalists. The moralists focused their response on Polish beliefs of altruism and righteousness, but modified them as end goals rather than present states of existence. The conditionalists argued for a “balanced” approach weighing both historical sides of the argument. Many of them were historians who had vested interests in preserving much of their previous work, and so they adopted a position that employed various values stemming from traditional myths heavily favouring old concepts of victimhood and suffering. The reactionaries were quite similar to the conditionalists. They both employed historical circumstance to legitimize their respective visions; however, the reactionaries rejected Polish collective responsibility and were more adamant in maintaining traditional mythology. They recognized Polish perpetration but as victims of the German war machine. The rejectionists dismissed responsibility in its entirety, and firmly kept to Polish righteousness, victimhood, and innocence. The responses were markedly different, but they all strove to bring order into the chaos inspired by the realization of the gap between myth and reality. Though varied, these approaches gradually came together and consolidated into two primary and visible

groups. The State and Church response to the controversy illustrated this growing consolidation and divide between the collectivists and the individualists.

Various State actors, influenced by the divisions in public opinion, had their own respective interpretations of Polish responsibility, which led to alternate, competing, and diverse responses to the six major Jedwabne related events that involved State authority. The official investigation, for example, demonstrated the internal divisions among its conditionalist and collectivist historians, as well as its prosecutor. They all struggled to accommodate the Jedwabne reality with their own sense of Polish mythology. The response to the Presidential announcement of an apology was very similar: the Polish President accepted collective responsibility employing images of progress and morality, while the Prime Minister denied it recognizing the nationality of the perpetrators but framing the act as part of Poland's victimized history. Under public pressure of the reactionaries and rejectionists, the President eventually changed his position and apologized only in the name of those who shared his view. The Government's international campaign was the first example wherein the Government strove to placate all groups by promoting a conditionalist image of the Pole as the suffering hero and responsible democrat. The memorial controversy was the second such example. The State institute responsible for monuments negotiated a meeting between the Jedwabne and Polish-Jewish communities producing a memorial text that favoured the reactionary and rejectionist interpretation of events and vision of identity. The text was silent on responsibility, and through its silence, the memorial perpetuated the idea of Polish innocence. At the end of May, the Government found itself torn once again between two contingent groups over the issue of the exhumation. In a compromise, the Government

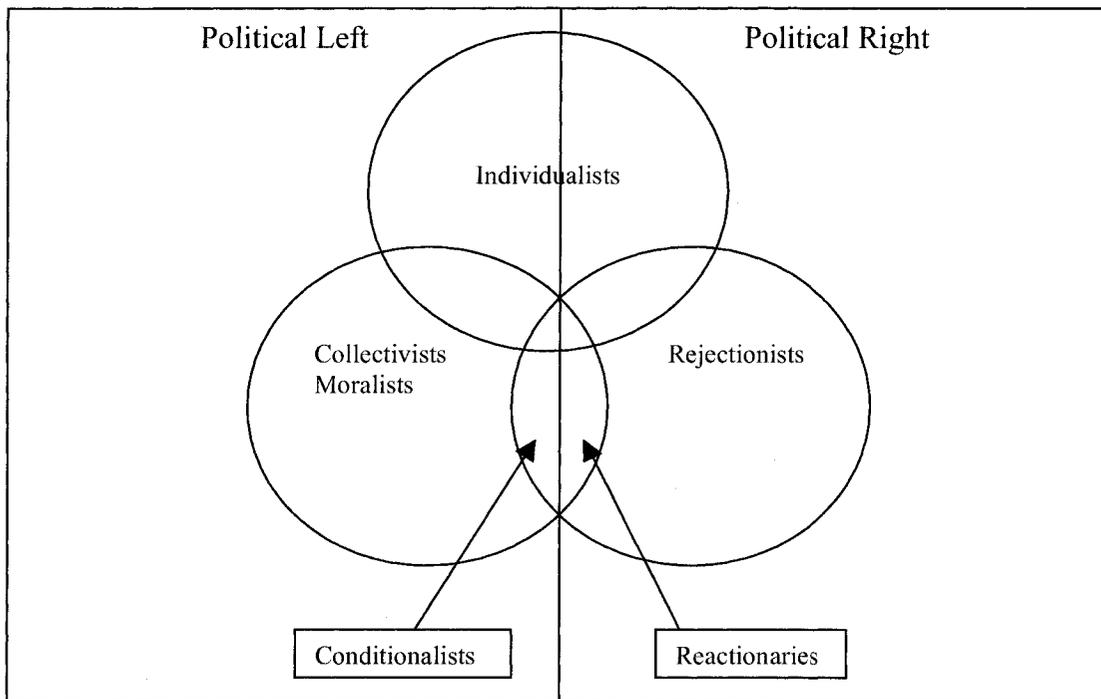
chose to accommodate both sets of interests. The conditionalist and reactionary historians got their exhumation, while preserving the religious rights of the Jewish community. The final event, the 60th commemorative anniversary, formalized the growing social polarity. The President held an official ceremony during which he apologized in conformity to the collectivist vision of Polish identity; and the Prime Minister held a concert in memoriam of the victims remaining silent on any form of Polish responsibility – a position that reflected his base support.

The Church community witnessed a related division between a small vocal liberal elite of collectivists and moralists and a traditional conservative base of reactionaries and rejectionists. The liberal elite advocated a moral sense of responsibility that bound the individual with the nation across time, and to the eternal laws set forth by God. They framed their approach as a new moral and progressive order that unified life in love. The conservative-traditional base kept to the altruistic image of Polish identity, and argued that the Jedwabne Affair was a product of an intentional international campaign designed to vilify the Pole. After increasing pressure, and the Presidential announcement of an apology, the Church hierarchy finally responded to the growing controversy. As the de-facto head of the Church, the Polish Primate announced a service in honour of the victims during which he would issue his own apology. However, he placed his response on conditional terms presenting a vision that made morality a condition of historical mythology. In response, the liberals fought to assert their position, and successfully convinced the Episcopate to adopt an apology without limitations, expectations, or conditions. Though the service was a success for a small group of the liberal elite, the process demonstrated a growing divide in the Church community between those who

viewed responsibility as a means to moral redemption and those who saw it as a direct challenge to the altruistic state of the Polish man.

By the end of the debate in July 2001, Jedwabne had divided the public, the State, and Church into two. The liberals, or political left, consisted of the collectivists and its two sub-groups, the moralists and conditionalists, and the conservatives, or the political right, comprised the reactionaries and rejectionists. The individualists fell in the middle. The diagram below illustrates the complex interactive nature between these various approaches. It explains why the individualist notion has the capacity to dissolve the collectivist model or be used as a tool within the reactionary/rejectionist camp. In dealing with issues outside of the Polish-Jewish spectrum, they dissolved into the other groups. In the context of Jedwabne, the reactionaries and rejectionists predominantly used the individualist approach as a means to forward their particular conceptualization of Polishness. Furthermore, the diagram depicts the similarity in approach between the conditionalist and reactionaries, each employing similar tactics though within their respective ideological groupings. With Jedwabne, the schism between these groups solidified, gradually deepening the divisions within Polish society as demonstrated by the diagram. Rather than creating a balanced system between the left and right, political authority and power has come to favour conservative ideology that has recently become a liability for European security.

Diagram 1



Depending on how each individual approached the Jedwabne controversy, which general argument they adopted as their vision of Polish identity, effectively established their political orientation, be it left or right, on most subsequent issues. Jedwabne, thus, became the measurement of political loyalties.

In the 2001 parliamentary elections, for example, the ruling AWS party dissolved and fell in favour of the former communists, the SLD. The elections also saw the rise of two new parties, Law and Justice (PiS) and Civic Platform (PO), as well as a surge in support for the populist Self-Defence party. It was in the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections, however, that Poles felt the schism translate into political expression. As previously mentioned, the Jedwabne Affair set the stage for the political divisions witnessed in these elections. Where individuals stood on the controversy, predicted their future political inclinations. The divisions present during the Affair resurfaced during the 2005 elections that witnessed the resurgence of the political

traditionalist conservative right. In a tête-à-tête race, the populist-right Law and Justice party beat out the leftist Civic Platform and formed a minority government together with Self-Defence and the nationalist-Catholic League of Polish Families party. The presidential elections came down to a similar division between Law and Justice and Civic Platform. Lech Kaczyński (PiS), former Justice Minister under Jerzy Buzek, won over Donald Tusk (PO) in a 54% to 45% split respectively.⁴¹⁷

Those who supported Lech Kaczyński were characteristic of the reactionaries and rejectionists during the Jedwabne controversy. This group had now become the ruling elite. Since Jedwabne, this conservative movement has gained considerable authority and legitimacy throughout Polish society, and has pursued a form of politics that has presented a liability for the European Community. In a precarious geographic and political position, in between two major powers, and on the edge of the European Union, the conservative movement has sought conflict rather than cooperation with its neighbours. From the Germans, the conservatives fought hard and loud demanding financial compensation for the destruction caused to Poland during World War Two. They furthered this victimized image by demanding from Russia recognition of the Katyń massacre as a genocide committed against the Polish people. In response, the Germans rejected any form of compensation, and the Russians denied the accusation. In both cases, the conservatives sacrificed other potential national interests in favour of internationally promoting Polish victimization and condemning those who victimized.

Furthermore, in the name of tolerance and democratic rights, the conservative Government encouraged the rise of such fascist youth organizations as the Greater-Polish

⁴¹⁷ IFES. "IFES Election Guide." 4 May 2006 <<http://www.electionguide.org/results.php?ID=76>>.

Youth – connected with the League of Polish Families party – who are known for their neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic rhetoric and extreme homophobia. Such individuals as the former mayor of Warsaw and current President, Lech Kaczyński, and other city mayors implicitly supported the youth's homophobic views by banning Pride Marches in their respective cities. The actions and opinions of these State officials sparked a controversy that reached the European Parliament. Found as unacceptable behaviour, the Members of the European Parliament reaffirmed their commitment and campaign against homophobia and demanded that Polish authorities exercise greater self-restraint in advocating such views for they verge on violating European law.

The most recent international provocation encouraged by the conservatives has been the growing influence of Father Tadeusz Rydzyk's radio station Radio Maryja, grace to which Lech Kaczyński won his presidency. This radio station is known for its anti-European, homophobic, and especially anti-Semitic views. The growing popularity and power of the conservative movement through such media as Radio Maryja has made anti-Semitic views increasingly acceptable within Polish society.

In a comparative survey study, Krzemiński demonstrates the general rise of anti-Semitism in Poland. This is mostly in the form of modern anti-Semitism characterized by political ideology rather than religious belief,⁴¹⁸ though traditional anti-Semitism remains “in the consciousness of a strictly defined category of people, specifically: among older people with limited educations, living in rural areas or smaller towns.”⁴¹⁹ In the years leading up to the Jedwabne Affair, for example, a survey (1992-1996) confirmed

⁴¹⁸ Ireneusz Krzemiński. “Polish-Jewish Relations, Anti-Semitism and National Identity.” *Polish Sociological Review*. 29.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.* 34.

those on the political right demonstrate the highest level of anti-Semitism and lowest level of pro-Jewish attitudes. Those on the left, on the other hand, demonstrate high levels of both anti-Semitism and anti-anti-Semitism. Supporters of the left are thus clearly divided in two groups: anti-Semites and anti-anti-Semites.⁴²⁰

The growth of modern anti-Semitic attitudes among the intellectual elite is a disturbing tendency

since well-educated individuals determine the tone of cultural changes, and this kind of polarization of attitudes among the intellectuals – who after all help mould public opinion – indicates that attitudes in broader social groups have undergone petrification. In addition, the views of some leaders help to perpetuate these old attitudes.⁴²¹

Nevertheless, Krzemiński also noted that the younger the respondent, the lower the level of anti-Semitism. Those with a higher degree of education were also more likely to exhibit anti-anti-Semitic or pro-Jewish views.⁴²² He also found that church attendance played an important role in shaping anti-Semitic attitudes, though he recognized a potential polarity within the Church hierarchy on this issue.

The significant role that church attendance played in the late 1990's in the formation of anti-Jewish views clearly suggests that the Catholic Church has had a negative influence on attitude formation...Religiosity seems to encourage negative feelings and anti-Semitism, albeit in its modern, political form.⁴²³

A trend report compiled shortly after the 60th commemorative ceremony of Jedwabne suggests that religiosity actually does have a positive and negative effect on levels of anti-Semitism. From 1996-2000, inspired by John Paul II's trip to the Holy Land, Poles increasingly strengthened their feelings of religious brotherhood with Jews; however, "already, a year later, after revealing the tragedy in Jedwabne we observed gradual weakening of this feeling. The consciousness in this area came back to the same

⁴²⁰ Ireneusz Krzemiński. "Polish-Jewish Relations, Anti-Semitism and National Identity." *Polish Sociological Review*. 36.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² *Ibid.* 34-35.

⁴²³ *Ibid.* 37.

point, which we noted in August 1996.”⁴²⁴ The trend report generally implied that the Church establishment has a significant effect in shaping anti-Semitic views.

Defusing to social consciousness the idea of common roots of Christianity and Judaism, strengthening the feeling of religious ties which connect these two nations should play a positive role in the process of shaping Poles’ attitudes toward Jews. It seems that it depends upon the Polish church whether or not this idea will strengthen in the consciousness of believers and help clearing the memory and conscious in the relations with a tragic lot of Polish Jews and will contribute to better relations between Poles and Jews.⁴²⁵

As demonstrated by the Church response to the Jedwabne Affair, and, until recently, the hierarchy’s continued complicit support of such views as those advocated by Rydzyk, the Church has greatly contributed to a traditional conservative ideology increasingly immersed in anti-Semitic, nationalist, and populist language. The silence and failure of the Polish Church and Pope John Paul II in tackling this issue directly, in particular Rydzyk’s growing popularity, has resulted in the increased acceptance and use of anti-Semitic rhetoric in Polish society. Rydzyk’s power has escalated to the point that the Vatican finally chose to intervene. Pope Benedict XVI recently issued a statement demanding that the Polish Church reign in Rydzyk’s popularity and political agency. In response, Radio Maryja questioned the legitimacy of the Pope and the validity of his intentions basing their commentary on his German ancestry, and therefore, “anti-Polish” position. In so doing, the German press picked up on this attack, and has launched a series of articles harshly criticizing the radio station, the Polish Church, and the Polish Government and Presidency as backward, anti-Semitic, and hostile to Germany.⁴²⁶

The conservative movement, stemming from the reactionary and rejectionist approaches during the Jedwabne debate, has emerged as a powerful force within Polish

⁴²⁴ “Trend Reports: Poles’ Opinions About the Crime in Jedwabne – Changes in Social Consciousness.” *Polish Sociological Review*. 1.137 (2002): 125.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.* 128.

⁴²⁶ Jan Puhl. “Papal Reprimand for Catholic Radio.” *Der Spiegel*. 2 May 2006.

society, as well as the European community. Through politics marred with undertones of Polish victimization, homophobia, and anti-Semitism, Poland has increasingly become a type of pariah within the European Union, considered as uncooperative, socially awkward, and over-confident in its real authority. Poland is still a developing country, and is weak compared to its two most significant neighbours. Rather than building constructive and mutual relationships of cooperation with Germany and Russia, as well as building bridges with the Jewish community, the conservative movement through its preoccupied victimized ideology has only sought to seed tension and further distrust. This is not to suggest that Poles “forgive and forget,” but rather begin to build a more constructive dialogue based on a fallible identity that accepts diversity and officially and publicly renounces attitudes of anti-Semitism.

There are increasing signs of this type of approach, especially with fostering closer Polish-Jewish relations. A new generation of scholars have begun to re-examine Polish-Jewish relations in the context of Polish history. Kraków, for example, has become the host to the largest Jewish festival outside of Israel on a yearly basis, and gradually, there has also been a type of re-awakening among both Poles and Jews of their common ancestry. These are still anecdotal examples, however, representative of a very small percent of the Polish population in an attitudinal sea that remains dominated by high levels of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate the tolerant, multicultural, and Western-oriented Jagiellonian struggle against the purity and mono-ethnicity of Piast ideology.

As for the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), the State institute responsible for spearheading the investigation, it returned to its intended purpose.

Following Jedwabne, the IPN resumed its duties as a lustration tool designed to purge the old order from the governing system. Kieres, seen as too far to the left following the Jedwabne Affair, lost his presidency in 2005 in favour of Janusz Kurtyka who was more sympathetic to the political right. In 2006, the institute began to investigate select secret police files among them Father Michał Czajkowski. Czajkowski has been one of the strongest proponents of the Polish-Jewish dialogue and instrumental in shaping the liberal ideology of tolerance within the political left. Without officially laying any charges, the IPN publically targeted Czajkowski and declared him as a communist collaborator forcing his resignation from the Catholic weekly *Znak* and from the Polish Council of Christian and Jews. Though Czajkowski's status as a collaborator has not yet been determined, his public outing follows the pattern and trend of a society that is strongly split in two engaged in a political civil war.

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Appendix A

The Press

Gazeta Wyborcza – the largest-circulation national daily newspaper, "liberal" in the American sense of the word.

Głos – nationalist-Catholic weekly

International Herald Tribune – a liberal elite daily newspaper which also includes *New York Times* news coverage

Polityka – second-largest-circulation newsmagazine, decidedly liberal (in the American sense of the word).

Rzeczpospolita – one of the major Polish dailies, middle-of-the-road.

Tygodnik Powszechny – Catholic intellectual weekly

Więź – Catholic intellectual monthly review

Wprost – largest-circulation newsmagazine, "liberal"

Znak – Catholic intellectual monthly review

Życie – conservative daily newspaper