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Book Review: Fear - Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz

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Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz*

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Professor Gross begins his argument with the following declaration concerning his methodology: The nature of prejudice is to make unwarranted totalizing claims, whereas understanding advances through elucidation of careful distinctions. These are directly opposed mental exercises. And if one tries to argue prejudice away by the usual procedure of testing hypotheses (that is, by pointing to alternative explanations or false deductions or limitations in the empirical evidence), one enters a kind of discourse where the prejudices basic premise is already accepted.

While the first sentence begins with a platitude, the subsequent ones remove us from the universally accepted scholarly method of testing hypotheses by means known since the emergence of Aristotelian logic. What is wrong, one might ask, with testing the null hypothesis that there is a great deal of anti-Semitism in Poland? Historians and lawyers have traditionally been comfortable with bringing forward facts to confirm or deny such a hypothesis.

In contrast, Gross declares that the above hypothesis is unacceptably formulated and then accepts no argument that it could be false. This in your face method of imposing one's foregone conclusions on the reader leaves no way of rebutting false assumptions by ushering evidence to the contrary. The use of this method in historical research allows one to reshape history by stating preposterous things later published by presses with the correct zip codes to congeal into the acceptable version of history.

Gross's way of arguing is quintessentially postmodern, i.e., not based on consideration of evidence. Nor does it draw conclusions by means of a ladder of syllogisms. He calls it analytical history: What I offer here, therefore, is not diachronic, but analytical history. I go back and forth in time over different aspects of events bearing on understanding the phenomenon of postwar anti-Semitism in Poland. From this point on, page xiii of the Introduction, there is no question that Gross will reach his conclusion. He does not conceal his willingness to treat as true the testimony of Communist officials, unnamed persons quoted from documentaries filmed during the 50-year Soviet occupation, sidewalk statements, just anything that agrees with his foregone conclusion. In contrast, evidence that might shatter these selected statements is simply not ushered in.

As is the case with some other rewritings of history, the authors foregone conclusion is fuzzy. It rambles over the entire book. But one comes close to a summary of his

conclusion on page 164: The conceptual and emotional fog veiling this story lifts somewhat only after we recognize that Jewish survivors were an unbearable sore spot, because they had been victimized by their Polish neighbours for centuries, but especially during the Nazi occupation ... Episodes of collective violence that, from a distance, appear random and elemental are on close scrutiny semantically rich. Virtually every moment is endowed with significance, as people continuously communicate and comment about what they are doing.

To paraphrase Gross's argument, it is that Catholic Poland is a continuing reservoir of ecclesiastically supported anti-Semitism. After World War II, this reservoir was a combustible mixture, which could be lit by anything. Once started, it could spread throughout the community with lethal results. By design or accident, Professor Gross's book has been timed to correspond to a political agenda.

Jews demand Polish restitution

Here is up-to-date (as of February 2007) political background to Gross's story. Although Poland did not produce a Quisling, and all expropriations were done by the German and Soviet occupiers, nevertheless, given the fact that the Poles did not save their Jews from the Germans and did not protect their property, the sins of the grandfathers require that the current impoverished Polish state pay massive reparations to Jewish individuals and organizations representing the interests of Holocaust survivors. The demands by these organizations are huge, well beyond the ability of Poland to pay. Twenty representatives of these organizations arrived in Warsaw on February 27, 2007, to press the Polish government for tens of billions of dollars of restitution. The Jewish organizations are not unaware of the fact that the European Union will be paying to the Poles, over the next several years, tens of billions of dollars for the improvement of Poland's long-neglected infrastructure. These organizations have in mind a better use for those monies.

Three pogroms

To support his conclusions, Gross focuses on three pogroms that occurred in Soviet-occupied Poland in 1945. One in Rzeszow (June 12, 1945), another in Krakow (August 11, 1945) and a third in Kielce (July 4, 1946). The number of Jews (Gross's figures) killed in the three pogroms were zero, one to five, and 42, respectively. Gross gives as his estimates for the total number of Jews killed in anti-Semitic events in Poland during the post-war period as being between 500 and 1,500 (*Fear*, p. 258).

When one thinks of pogroms historically, these figures hardly rise to the level of ethnic cleansing. In 1648, the Cossack leader Bogdan Khmelnitsky set off the killing of over 100,000 Ukrainian Jews. The Nazi regime killed six million Jews from all over Europe during the period 1939-1945. The period immediately after World War II was one of utter devastation in Poland. In one NKVD action in Swanky (July 1225, 1945), 600,800 Polish Catholics were killed (Rzeczpospolita, 9 July 2005). The rate of 500 killed for 250,000 Jews living in Poland during the interval 1945-1948 (Gross's figure, p. 258) does not seem far out of line for a similar ratio regarding the Catholic population. In a country which in 1945 still fought against enslavement by Communism, it would not be out of line if one person in 500 died a violent death.

Gross concentrates on the Kielce (July 4, 1946) pogrom. This produced 42 deaths.

Early on, there were two basic interpretations of what had gone on: the position of the government and that of the Catholic bishops. The Communist government of Bierut and Berman claimed that this was the result of an attack by the AK and NSZ (forces loyal to the pre-war government exiled in London). Much effort was spent by the Communists and hundreds of people were tortured to produce evidence to support this view. Yet, nobody today takes the Bierut position seriously.

The position of the Catholic episcopacy was that the Kielce pogrom was a bungled provocation, planned long in advance by the Communists. On June 30, there had been the rigged election (the Three Times Yes meant to legitimize the government of Soviet-occupied Poland). The Communists wished to have a manufactured incident on the American Fourth of July in order to deflect attention from the fact that democracy in Poland had formally and ceremonially ceased to exist. The killing of the Jews on 7 Planty Street involved a number of deaths by gunshot. Yet, the only persons, outside the military and organs of state security, who were allowed to carry arms were, in fact, such organizations as the Jewish group hunkered down on Planty Street. (Any Polish Catholic found with a firearm was summarily executed.) Gross ignores this inconvenient fact.

Five Polish priests tried to get to the area and were turned back by a cordon of police that had instantly appeared where the pogrom was taking place (Kielce, July 4, 1946: Background, Context and Events, Toronto: Polish Educational Foundation, 1996). Of course, the entire civil administration was under the control of the Communist government, whose leadership in Warsaw appeared to be well in touch with the events taking place in Kielce. There was throughout the feeling of a badly choreographed and poorly timed play. A Russian NKVD unit arrived under apparently prearranged orders prepared to annihilate a crowd of bloodthirsty Poles. But there was no crowd when the NKVD units arrived.

There is much *cui bono* evidence to support the position of the Catholic bishops. Gross is incensed that the bishops did not follow the directive of the Communist government to denounce the killings. But they did denounce those killings. What they did not do was to support the charges of the Communist government that the killings were the result of actions planned by the anti-Communist forces. The presenter of the bishops report, Bishop Czeslaw Kaczmarek, paid dearly for his intransigence. He was tortured for months and sentenced (without his teeth, which the security police had removed from his jaws) to a lengthy sentence by a Communist court of spying for the Americans. This fact is not mentioned by Gross.

Gross treats the Kielce UB (secret police) as though they were led by Inspector Jane Tennyson of New Scotland Yard rather than as ruthless, highly disciplined apparatchik. He talks grandly about this or that key person being on summer holidays as though in July of 1946 people were off taking the waters at a spa or hunting grouse on the moors. Yet Kielce in 1946 was incomparably worse off than London after the Blitz. This was a city under occupation since September of 1939. It was under complete control of the Russian-run administration and spontaneous civil demonstrations were unthinkable.

Pareto Principle

One thing in common to the position of the government and that of the bishops is that

both views assumed that the murders at Planty 7 were planned and directed by leaders and not spontaneous acts of individual mob members. This confirms the so-called Pareto Principle, which notes that catastrophic failures in systems are due to one or a few assignable causes, rather than a general malaise across the system. Throughout the ghastly Holocaust of Jews, Poles, Gypsies, etc., the Nazi killings were planned and organized. From the lootings of Kristallnacht to the gassings at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the killing and violence were planned and directed. Gross denounces the view of the bishops and does not exactly support the government's view, either. Rather, he advances a position revisionist to that of the government (*Fear*, p. 163):

I find the terms pogrom and prowokacja misleading in denoting episodes of collective behaviour such as took place in Kielce. They relegate the phenomenon to the repertoire of mob behaviour, attributing it implicitly to socially marginal malcontents presumably acting out their frustrations and quite frequently manipulated to do so by unscrupulous agents of the ruling strata, who thus deflect the resolution of mounting social conflicts. But on July 4, 1946, in Kielce, we did not see an unexpected blowup by the lumpenproletariat. Instead, it was Mr. (and Mrs.) Tout-le-Monde, the Mom-and-Pop crowd deliberate and very much at ease with what they were doing.

In Gross's view, the killings at Kielce were due to a general spirit of anti-Semitism, which spontaneously led to the actions of a mass of individuals. In other words, Gross stands the Pareto Principle on its head and claims that Kielce was due to a general malaise across the Polish Catholic society. In Gross's view, this is a continuing problem fueled by Polish Catholicism.

Jews in Soviet security apparatus

Having made his argument for systemic anti-Semitism in Poland, Gross then spends some chapters to establish his other major conclusion: Polish anti-Semitism has nothing to do with any imagined collaboration between Polish Jews and the Soviets. Although Professor Gross will brook no testing of null hypotheses, the reader might be interested in the statement by Professor Andrzej Paczkowski, former head of the respected Institute of National Memory, to the effect that the proportion of Jews on the central decision-making level in the Soviet-controlled security apparatus in Poland was about 30 per cent (Paczkowski, *Zydzi w UB proba weryfikacji stereotypu*, in *Komunizm: ideologia, system, ludzie*, edited by Tomasz Szarota. Warsaw: Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2001, p. 197).

There were approximately 25 million Polish Catholics in Poland in 1945. There were approximately 250,000 Jews in Poland in 1945. After a little arithmetic, we find that the proportion of Jews who opted to join the UB was 42 times that of Catholics. Gross does not dispute the fact that the proportion of Jews willing to work for the secret police was higher than that of the Catholics. But he gives an intriguing explanation for why this was so (*Fear*, p. 227): But the MBP did not look specifically for Jews to fill the available positions. There was an overall shortage of qualified personnel; people were being pulled every which way to take jobs all over the new administration and what one ended up doing was very often a matter of pure coincidence.

In other words, the reason for the alarmingly higher proportion of Jews than that of Catholics in the UB was the relatively greater competence of the Jews. And that

competitive advantage must have been substantial, as the ratio of 42 would indicate. In Gross's analysis, there is no attention given to the fact a Polish Catholic who joined the UB would be regarded as a traitor to his nation and would be excommunicated from his Church. By Gross's calculus, Polish Catholics were under-represented in the UB because they were less competent.

The invasion of Poland by Germany and Russia in September of 1939 was an unprovoked partition of the country. It is understood that the Poles were not pleased by the Russian occupation, but it may be thought that the Russian occupation was a minor annoyance compared to the occupation by the Germans. In an earlier book, *Revolution from Abroad* written in his pre-postmodern days, when Gross was an associate professor at Emory, Gross carefully and with excellent documentation shows how wrong this notion was. He wrote (*Revolution from Abroad*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1st ed., p. 229): These very conservative estimates show that the Soviets killed or drove to their deaths three or four times as many people as the Nazis from a population half the size of that under German jurisdiction. This comparison holds for the first two years of the Second World War, the period before the Nazis began systematic mass annihilation of the Jewish population.

Soviet terror

Gross shows that, for Polish Catholics, the Soviets were even worse, indeed much worse than the brutal Nazis. Essentially, all the Polish professional and semi-professional classes (doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, managers, foremen, farmers with holdings beyond a few acres, etc.) were rounded up by the Soviets and then either killed immediately or retained in prisons for shipments to slave labour camps in Siberia and Central Asia. Prison conditions were hellish, worse than those in the Nazi concentration camps. Gross writes (*Revolution*, p. 161): In Lwow 28 people living in an 11.5-square-metre cell relied on the geometrical skills of a gifted high-school student who fitted them most ingeniously by size into an intricate pattern. Sanitary conditions were appalling, with inmates frequently forced to urinate and defecate on the floors of the cells.

Jews welcomed Soviet invasion

What was the situation with the Jews in the lands occupied by the Soviets and what was their attitude to the occupiers? Gross writes (*Revolution*, p. 32): What Poles and Ukrainians report, often with biting irony, the Jews do not deny: Jews greeted the Soviet army with joy. The youth was spending days and evenings with the soldiers ... Jews received incoming Russians enthusiastically; they (the Russians) also trusted them (the Jews).

Again, Gross writes (*Revolution*, p. 34, quoting Celina Koninska): It is hard to find words to describe the feeling, this waiting and this happiness. We wondered how to express ourselves, to throw flowers? To sing? To organize a demonstration? How to show our great joy? I think the Jews awaiting the Messiah will feel, when he finally comes, the way we felt. These warm receptions by Jews for the Soviets in eastern Poland were in September of 1939, when there were no Germans in sight. The Jews were rejoicing over the occupation of eastern Poland by the Russians. To Polish Catholics, this was simply treason, analogous to the occasional warm receptions in western Poland of the Germans by some Volksdeutsche.

Now, it is undeniable that in the German-occupied portion of Poland, where the situation of the Jews was worse than that of the Catholics, many Polish families hid Jews from the Nazi occupiers. It is a matter of record that Poles are listed at Yad Vashem numerically first amongst the righteous Gentiles for risking their lives and those of their families for sheltering Jews from the Nazis. So, it is fair to ask the question, When did Jews use their favoured position in Soviet-occupied eastern Poland to shelter Polish Catholics from the NKVD? This reviewer regrets to say that he cannot find any instances of such assistance.

Soviet executions of Polish Catholics

Up to the day (June 22, 1941) when Hitler broke his deal with Stalin and invaded Soviet-occupied Poland, Gross (*Revolution*, p. 194) estimates that 1.25 million people were transported into the Soviet Union from eastern Poland. The ghastly NKVD prisons in Poland were generally used as holding cells for Poles awaiting execution or prison train space for transportation to the gulags. When the Germans attacked the Soviets on June 22, 1941, the NKVD killed or moved to the east 150,000 prisoners from these holding cells. In the Brygidki prison in Lwow on June 22, 1941, the NKVD killed almost all of the 13,000 inmates. (*Revolution*, p. 179). This was recorded by Gross as a massacre, rather than a pogrom. After the Nazis occupied western Poland in 1939, they encouraged anti-Semitic acts by the Poles, including pogroms. The Germans had only the most minimal success. Polish Catholics were not inclined to participate in Nazi murders. Moreover, the Polish underground punished betrayal of Jews to the Nazis by death.

After the Russians rapidly retreated following the German attack of June 22, 1941, in the brief time interval before the Germans could take over, there was a number of killings of collaborators, including many Jews, by the Polish underground. One example of such took place in Szczuczyn, where there were four NKVD prisons. Gross gives such killings as evidence of Polish anti-Semitism. But, we still must wonder why the Polish Catholics in German-occupied western Poland, where pogroming was a state-subsidized activity, had not engaged in such activities.

Gross's allegations are false; financial claims outrageous

As stated early on in this review, Professor Gross disdains to use empirical timeline data and Aristotelian logic to prove his point. To those of us who believe in logical conclusions based on facts, his thesis does not hold water. Worse, it is beyond mean-spirited to treat Catholic Poland, victimized by half a century of brutal and systematic rape, as though it were itself a rapist. And to offer up Catholicism, the faith that has sustained the Polish nation in its 50-year-long ordeal, as an underlying cause of Poland's alleged anti-Semitism is not acceptable. There is no question that there is a very large choir with whom Gross's voice resonates. The Jews lost property during the Second World War in Poland and the Poles must pay for it. If the cupboard is bare, if there is massive deprivation, even starvation in Poland, it makes no difference.

This raises another question. According to Teresa Bochwic (*Rzeczpospolita*, August 3, 2002), two out of three of the current residents of Poland have either suffered the loss of their homes as a result of World War II and the events following or are descendants of those who have. The organs of state security, led by such persons as Jakub Berman,

and the Soviet NKVD, were directly responsible for the deaths of over one million Polish Catholics. Where should the Catholic victims go for redress of grievances? Poles ask simply to be left alone, to be freed from quasi-legal attacks by those who would keep them oppressed forever. Poland had the highest proportion of deaths during World War II (17 per cent of the population). Next to the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. and Great Britain, Poland contributed the greatest number of troops in the war against Hitler. The Polish underground produced the highest number of attacks against the Nazis of any occupied country and suffered the greatest retaliations. There was no Quisling or Petainist government in Poland. Collaboration with the Nazis was rare and punished by the underground by death. Poland has the largest number of righteous Gentiles recorded at Yad Vashem. It should take more than post-modern sermonizing to justify the further victimization of this long-suffering nation.

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In Search of Polish Anti-Semitism

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I

Sacred Causes is a recent book by the very talented English historian Michael Burleigh. Its theme is well conveyed by the subtitle, *The Clash of Religion and Politics from The Great War to the War on Terror* and its subtle and well researched argument is that various regimes of the twentieth century, especially authoritarian ones, established secular liturgies of power in which all the emotional attachments of private life were co-opted by the State. It is an arresting idea but not a particularly novel one.

Christopher Dawson saw the same syndrome a couple of generations ago, the symbolic language of flags and anthems used to cast a semi-religious glow over the pagan rites of Fascism. Even today, presidential inaugurations, state openings of parliament, and pledges of allegiance are the civic sacraments of our public life. Yet Burleigh's book, obvious enough in some ways, has prompted vigorous hostility in certain circles. Perhaps because he defends the wartime record of Pius XII, perhaps because he dislikes the sneering secularists who dominate European culture, perhaps because he is conservative, the book has caused liberal ire.

Fewer responses have been more indignant than that of Professor Tony Judt of New York University. In Burleigh's universe, according to Judt, everything is black and white, all subtlety excluded. An odd objection (seeming to confuse clarity of expression with crudity of thought), at least it establishes Judt himself as the arbiter of nuance. But this turns out to be misleading.

Listen to some of his more considered judgments. The silence of Pope Pius XII in the face of the Holocaust facilitated the work of extermination in those countries where the Roman Catholic Church exercised moral and social authority.¹ His representatives actively collaborated in mass murder. It is utter nonsense to say that today's Polish Church has distanced itself from its wartime anti-Semitism. Poland's clergy are fundamentally anti-Semitic.² Burleigh fails to cite the work of Jan Gross who chronicles the wartime massacre of Jews by their Polish neighbors. And so on. Someone is living in a black-and-white world and it does not seem to be Burleigh.

Why draw attention to this unpleasant philippic? At one level, it is nothing new. The Silence of Pius XII industry is one of the few profitmaking branches of the historical profession, his muteness, as it were, speaking in volumes. The fact that Pius helped save tens of thousands of Jews and is considered a righteous gentile little ice with his detractors. As Joseph Bottum has noticed, Pius's defenders have won every battle but have lost the Pius War, his brand now completely contaminated. The reason for this, Rabbi David Dalin suggests, is that the Pius War has always been about more than Pius, he merely the excuse for an intra-mural Catholic fight. Judt has nothing novel, or very interesting, to say about any of this. Likewise his hostility to Poland: it is all rather tired.

There is no denying a long mutual antagonism over the years between some Poles and some Jews. That history has been the subject of extensive scholarship whose purpose has been to elucidate a complex story, not to inflame ancient animosities. In recent years, however, a new and altogether different discourse has emerged. Hostile to methodological restraint, grounded in fanciful claims of post-modernity, frequently tendentious and bitter, it is more hysterical than historical. Professor Judt is one exponent of it, Professor Daniel Goldhagen another, Professor Jan Gross, cited above, a third. Quoting and commending each other,³ appearing in the best newspapers, shaping opinion far beyond the historical profession, they command the field.

Honest and vigorous disagreement is the stuff of academic debate, of course, and the troika in question are quite entitled to engage in it. Yet their scholarship is marked by a rhetorical extravagance that is deeply unsettling. Some other purpose, ideological or personal, seems to be at work as they plod through the records and archives. There lingers the faintest suggestion of an agenda. What, one wonders, could it be?⁴

II

To understand this argument, some context is necessary. The Poland carved up in 1939 and in ruins in 1945 was put together with extreme difficulty in 1918 and the years that followed. The establishment of its frontiers was one of the most complicated episodes of modern European history, taking six border wars and one really serious conflict, the Polish-Soviet war of 1919-1920, before a recognisable modern State could emerge.⁵ Poland owed little to her allies, still less to her enemies, both greeting its re-

emergence as an independent nation with contempt. Stalin called it if you will pardon the expression, a State. Lloyd George sneered that she won her freedom not by her own exertions but by the blood of others. Molotov spoke of it as the monstrous bastard of the Peace of Versailles.⁶ Maurice Baring noticed in 1905, half a generation before independence, that Poland's free existence depended not on herself but on her western and eastern neighbors. If the Kaiser and the Tsar (or their successors) wished her to disappear, she would.⁷

Frail and unloved, Poland faced similar problems of legitimacy inside her own borders. Ukrainians, Germans, Jews, and Byelorussians constituted nearly a third of the population, their national identity unclear and provisional. Of these, Jews, nearly ten percent of the whole, were divided between assimilationists and rejectionists. Polishness and Jewishness became the subject of intense debate. (One parallel might be with Northern Ireland's Catholics, a minority enclave in a new British state in 1921. This was another triumph, by the way, for Lloyd George.) Did Poland have a future? Did Jews have a future in Poland? What did it actually mean to be Polish? To be a Jew? These were not new anxieties. In a sense, they were the oldest Jewish anxieties of all. After 1918, however, they acquired new urgency. As the peace-makers of Versailles went home, they left problems that only a new and far bloodier war would resolve.

Poland was thus an amalgam of territories and peoples. So too, even more complicatedly, was Polish Jewry. Even before the creation of the Second Republic, many Polish Jews, proletarianised and pauperised, were divided. What common interests, if any, did Jewish workers have with Polish nationalists? If Polish independence was a liberal, bourgeois dream, why should the proletariat, Jewish or otherwise, bother with it? What was meant by Jewish nationalism? Was it a State or a state or mind? Was the State Poland or Palestine? Was the state of mind Mosaic or Marxist? Such were the debates of the inter-war years. Jews seemed in Poland but not quite of Poland. Their minds and hearts lay elsewhere with Russia, perhaps, or with the Middle East, or with America. Were they an enclave or an exclave? If the latter, an exclave of what? Another country or the international working class?

This Jewish apartness had been a problem for centuries, of course. Fifty years before, the Tsarist regime, hostile to Jews in public life forced their resettlement within the borders of the Congress Kingdom. Jews thus became the unwitting tool of Russification within Polish life: the so-called Litvak Jew problem.⁸ A couple of generations later, after the overthrow of the Tsar, Jews were still identified in Poland as tools of Russification, this time in its Bolshevik form: a rather grim irony. Regimes might come and go but the Jewish problem remained. That Polish Jews themselves recognised it as a problem, offering contradictory solutions, is the fascination of the story.

None of this is to say that relations between Poles and Jews were straightforwardly antagonistic. That is the whole point. Whatever they were, they were not straightforward at all. In a fine recent study of wartime Janow Lubelski [*Between Nazis and Soviets: Occupation Politics in Poland, 1939-1947* (Lanham and Toronto: Lexington Books, 2004)], an agricultural area in central Poland, Marek Jan Chodakiewicz has revealed a richly textured world where class, religion, language, employment, age, place of residence, level of education, political affiliation and many other variables combined to produce different mental universes existing side by side. The sheer

variety of social understandings, daunting to outsiders, made a certain sense to those in the know. Self-contained but overlapping worlds could be recognised by a gesture, a word, an item of dress. Co-operation and conflict between and within different groups was common.

Conflict had a multitude of roots, Chodakiewicz argues, stemming from differences in wealth and status among the inhabitants, family vendettas, religious and ethnic prejudices, resistance to obligations imposed by the government, and political quarrels. Sometimes the origins of a row could be forgotten but the fight could continue down the generations nonetheless. (Anyone who knows anything of rural life will recognize this instantly.) A hopeless entanglement of slights and perceived slights pitted government official against citizen, townsman against villager, peasant against peasant, peasant against landed noble, and Jew against Christian (and vice versa). Sometimes the conflict was resolved violently, sometimes it simply petered out.

In such a world, the simplicities of black-and-white fade to grey. Jews and Christians lived together yet also lived apart. Sometimes co-operating with each other, sometimes socialising together, sometimes laying claim to a shared Polishness, sometimes denying it, they kept their distance, recognising that differences of class, language and religion made real amity difficult. In Janow County, for instance, the peasant reaction against middlemen had an anti-Jewish edge. Jews faced harassment and occasional violence, almost (it seemed) inviting them. They were charged with price gouging, usury, promoting alcoholism, fencing stolen property, dishonest business practices, supporting Communism. Their association with radical politics was particularly offensive to traditional peasant culture. All leftist radicals were considered Communists but Jewish ones were ... regarded as especially so. None of this was very subtle. Individual actions were considered representative of the group as a whole. Stereotypes abounded. On the other hand, none of these images were groundless either.

In many ways, rural Europe, certainly rural Poland, was not far removed from medievalism in the tightness and tensions of its communal life. Jews were on the margins of that life yet also, strangely, at its centre. As far as antagonism was concerned, they also gave as good as they got. Many Jews considered non-Jews to be inferior.⁹ They looked down on Gentile businessmen, on impoverished peasants, on Catholic priests, the last in particular as little more educated than their flock. (This idea recurs, often unpleasantly, in much subsequent historiography.) Christians and Jews kept their distance because each wanted to keep their temper.

With the depression of the 1930s, these tensions mounted. As rural poverty deepened, Jewish businesses were boycotted. This had almost nothing to do with religion, much more to do with economics. The chronically miserable lives of Polish peasants, even more than the wretchedness of the industrial proletariat, brought ugliness to social relations. In some places, it used to be joked, the peasant slept with his wife but in Potok he slept with the pig, meaning that if he did not it would be stolen from him.

Boycott was the only effective weapon in a rural economy that depended on perceived fairness, on the idea that hardship should be evenly shared. Rightly or wrongly, it was believed that Jews had unfair advantages. In the 1930s, farm prices fell by fifty percent, the cash income of peasant families collapsed, government subsidies to agriculture were cut to a quarter of the levels of the 1920s. Peasant families could not feed their

children, Professor Norman Davies writes, or send them to school or buy shoes for them. Usury and drunkenness flourished. The Jewish money lender and tavern keeper, through no fault of his own, attracted general disgust.¹⁰

Tensions within the Jewish community were also on the rise.¹¹ As we have seen, Jewish opinion was far from monolithic before the War. Indeed a standard complaint of Polish Jews was that official anti-Semitic propaganda refuse[d] to distinguish between Jew and Jew, almost suggesting that such propaganda might have received a degree of support from some Jews had it been more sophisticated.¹² The Agudas Israel was the most influential party of Orthodox Jewry, dominated by rabbis, bitterly anti-Zionist, favoured by the Pilsudski government. The Mahzikay Hadas (confined to Eastern Galicia) was even more hostile to Zionism and even more rabbinical. Zionist parties ranged from orthodox to secular, appealing variously to urban professionals, lower middle-class tradesmen, clerks, union members, war veterans, young people, artisans. To orthodox Jews, some Zionist parties, the Zionist Revisionist Union, for example, were themselves anti-Semitic. Favoring mass emigration of Jews from Poland, they played into the hands of the Pilsudski regime. It would be quite possible, thus, for a Christian to be anti-Semitic for being friendly towards a Jew by encouraging him, in other words, to assimilate to Poland. (One is reminded of the logic of American racism where one may stand accused of bias for thinking of a person racially or for not thinking of a person racially.) Assimilationist Jews wished to be as Polish as possible, thinking Jewish nationality a delusion. The misfortune of Jews in Europe, said one of their leaders, is that their history before coming to Europe told them to live in isolation outside of the life of the surrounding European nations. They should simply forget this history, he said, and live the life of their neighbors.¹³ This, in turn, led to another paradox.

The socialist theorist Feliks Perl lamented that Jewish jargon will never serve the cultural needs of a higher level; it is only ...an elementary guide to culture for the unenlightened masses.¹⁴ Here was a form of Jewish anti-Semitism. Entirely secular, Perl had contempt for sacred symbols, exhibiting a kind of deracinated embarrassment at his own tribal origins. When Jews could be hostile to other Jews for denying their shared Jewishness, and when Christians could be deemed anti-Semitic for wishing for Jews and Christians to live together harmoniously, the notion of anti-Semitism struggles to contain the contradictions and complexities of the world it seeks to describe. To be sure, Christian hostility towards Jews is not to be explained, still less justified, by invoking the self-hating Jew eager to win favour by a form of ethnic and religious invisibility. The plight of Jews in post-1918 Poland was real. They found themselves in a newly created State to which many had no natural or emotional affinity. They were unpopular and were sometimes the authors of that unpopularity. But anti-Semitism was a fact of life among Jews, too. The Socialism of secular Jews was a scientific form of it. Appealing beyond ethnicity to identity defined by class, Marxism promised a secular utopia: next year, as it were, in Moscow, not Jerusalem. Communism made many Polish Jews abandon the jargon ... of the unenlightened masses for a new jargon concocted in the reading room of the British Museum. Very few Polish Catholics, then or since, had any time for that second language.

This is one of several reasons why many studies of Polish anti-Semitism seem to fail. They speak of the Catholic view of the Jew when in fact there were several catholic views of several kinds of Jews, and several Jewish views, too. Anna Landau-Czajka, examining the Catholic press in inter-war Poland, laments the emphasis of Catholic

writers on the religious, national, and sometimes racial distinctiveness of Jews, the allegation of their destructive role in the Jewish State, their lack of loyalty towards the country of their host, their plans to usurp power in the economy, culture and politics ... [the assumption] that Polish Catholics and Jews would for many reasons inevitably develop into hostile camps.¹⁵ It seems a powerful indictment until one realizes that similar arguments, sometimes as lamentation, sometimes as celebration, appeared in the Jewish press, too.

To be sure, many Catholics spoke in a way that now appears crude and exaggeratedly confrontational. Talk of the perfidious Jews, a theological term meaning faithless rather than treacherous, was not calculated to charm. On the other hand, if Catholics used religious categories to describe the Jewish problem, the language of separatism they borrowed from Jews themselves. That is why we must be so careful about language which may obscure truth as readily as it reveals it.

Consider, for instance, the 1936 pastoral letter of Cardinal Augustyn Hlond, Primate of Poland, in which he proposed, among other things, that the Jewish problem [would persist] as long as the Jews remain. Some Jews argued precisely the same, of course, arguing either for complete assimilation in effect the disappearance of Jewishness or Zionism in effect, the disappearance of Jews. It is a fact, Hlond wrote, that the Jews are fighting against the Catholic Church, persisting in free-thinking, and are the vanguard of godlessness, Bolshevism and subversion... It is a fact that the Jews deceive, levy interest and are pimps.

This is certainly offensive and critics of Polish anti-Semitism have made hay with it. Yet in the same letter he stated explicitly that it was inadmissible for Christians to assault, hit or injure Jews. Hlond's target was secularism, indeed Communism, not Judaism per se. This does not undo the charmlessness of the language but it provides some explanation for it. Naturally, Catholics wished for the conversion of Jews to Christianity but, barring that, they wished them to be religious not irreligious. Not all Jews are like this, Hlond concluded. There are very many Jewish faithful who are honest, just, compassionate and charitable.¹⁶

Writing in the journal *Pro Christo*, another commentator noticed that the reputation of Jews was injured by those elements which did not practise the Mosaic religion and this, regrettably, was the majority.¹⁷ Looking East, many Catholics saw a Soviet system that threatened the survival of Poland. They also noticed its debased Jewish origins. Of course, even if all Bolsheviks were Jews (as they were not) that did not mean that all Jews were Bolsheviks. Yet Hlond's point was well taken: Communism did threaten a traditional way of life.

Many Catholics believed that Communism was what happened when Jews misunderstood their own Judaism, turning the search for a promised land into a materialism that hoped for the economic conquest of the whole world.¹⁸ On this evidence, Hlond may not seem especially attractive but we need to be level-headed in interpreting his words. He was not so anti-Semitic, for instance, to avoid arrest and imprisonment by the Gestapo in 1944. Nor should it be forgotten that his reports of Nazi persecution of Jews and priests in Poland were broadcast on Vatican Radio in 1940 and used at Nuremberg five years later. Nor was he aware of how language could be manipulated for political effect by avowed enemies, as happened after the War when his

alleged anti-Semitism was used to isolate the Polish Church from the rest of the world, especially America, one of the principal aims of Communist policy.¹⁹ Plucked from context, his words are stark and unappealing. But context is everything.

III

Into this subtle, complex, multiple world, into this mysterious mingling of different universes sharing the same physical space, come Professors Judt, Gross and Goldhagen. They come bearing arms and prepared to use them. They come with historical and moral certainty. They come to prosecute. They come to set us straight. It is not an elegant picture.

Let us consider Professor Gross. He has led the way in unpeeling what he sees as a culture of profound anti-Semitism in Poland during and after the War. His books *Neighbors* and *Fear* have generated considerable scholarly conversation because their subject-matter is so compelling and because, published by a reputable university press, they claim a certain authority. Gross's project, as he explains in *Fear*, is to show widespread collusion [by Poles] in the Nazi-driven plunder, spoliation, and eventual murder of Jews. This explains persistent Polish anti-Semitism during the Soviet era, there being in effect an implicit social contract between the increasingly anti-Semitic Communist state and Polish society, each wishing to keep silent about what happened to Jews between 1939 and 1945. Both benefited from this silence, he argues, hoping that under its cover those few Jews remaining in Poland would go elsewhere. These are serious allegations, the more so because, by their nature, they are hard to prove. (Implicit social contracts do not turn up in archives very often.)

This problem of proof does not deter Professor Gross. He offers, instead, an accumulation of instances to support his sense that the bargain by which Communists were allowed to grab and keep power after 1945 was shared silence about the fate of Polish Jewry.²⁰ It is alarming that Professor Gross seems to so sure of his intuitions especially when they point to conclusions frankly eccentric.²¹ But how, precisely, does he apply those intuitions to the evidence? He is aware that Poles and Jews spent years exchanging mutually offensive caricatures, some almost comically grotesque, as if not meant to be taken entirely seriously, others genuinely unpleasant.²² He wishes to challenge such prejudice as untenable. To do so, however, he must offer a definition of prejudice itself (even if he seems to use the word, mistakenly, as a synonym for bigotry.)

The nature of prejudice, he suggests, is to make unwarranted totalizing claims. To combat such claims we need understanding and elucidation of careful distinctions. The problem, however, is that even to engage in this elucidation is to enter a kind of discourse where the prejudices basic premise is already accepted ... we end up framing the argument half apologetically as if we granted that the prejudicial claims were empirically derived. And so, explicitly disavowing the usual procedure of testing hypotheses as unduly favourable to prejudice itself, Professor Gross proposes instead a circuitous effort of successive approximations whose effect is to give coherence to evidence that may at first appear odd and fragmented. In Professor Gross's world, evidence thus exists not to be examined but to reinforce a sense of what the story really means. It never occurs to him that the evidence may be odd and fragmented precisely

because his explanatory assumption is inept in the first place. Verdict first, trial later seems to be his Alice-in-Wonderland principle.

It gets worse. Lack of evidence is as important as evidence itself. It may be impossible to prove a negative, he assures us, but one can still make inferences about the absence of evidence where one should expect to find it.²³ (From Alice to Sherlock Holmes, we are now in the kennel of the dog who did not bark in the night.) In a narrow sense, of course, Professor Gross has a point. Lack of evidence can be quite telling. However, the question then becomes the nature of the expectation, the validity of the sense that something ought to be there where one should think to find it.

Lack of evidence does indeed tell us something about our own anticipations. And it is here that Professor Gross blunders. He seems to imagine that his presuppositions are somehow self-ratifying and are actually confirmed by this absence of evidence. They are not. And precisely because they are not, he can only rescue himself from catastrophe by returning to the usual procedure of testing hypotheses which he has disdained as unduly favourable to prejudice. Unwittingly, he exemplifies in his own methods the kind of prejudice his book seeks to overturn.

Nor is this all. If prejudice is the making of unwarranted totalizing claims, how well does he live up to his own strictures? Listen to *Fear*:

Jews were vulnerable to mass violence anywhere in Poland;²⁴ Polish Jews encountered hostility. It was universal and ubiquitous.²⁵ Cannibalistic theology held ... sway over the minds of the Polish clergy.²⁶ Confronted with mass murder [the deaths of over 40 Jews in Kielce in July 1946] ... Poland's Catholic hierarchy abdicated its responsibility... Catholic hierarchs said that Jews were Communists and that they brought all their misfortunes upon themselves ... While innocent Jews were tormented to death, [the] Catholic clergy [were] blinded by prejudice.²⁷ The postwar hatred of Jews in Poland was ... lethal ... widespread ... untamed ...²⁸ When attacking Jews in order to get rid of them once and for all, people were not acting out their vampire fantasies or their Judeo-Communist fantasies ... they were defending their real interests, quite often premised on murky deals or outright criminal behavior.²⁹ It was ordinary Poles widespread collusion with the Nazi-driven extermination of the Jews which alone could produce such [callous absence of compassion for the Holocaust]³⁰ Cardinal Sapieha [here he quotes an observer] ... seemed an evil and ruthless person, and an anti-Semite.

If such is the sense by which Professor Gross interprets odd and fragmented evidence of an implicit social contract between Communist and Catholic Poland after the War, it is a profoundly disturbed one. The danger of confronting prejudice, he tells us, is that we enter a discourse where its basic premises are already half conceded. This he has avoided by accepting the entire prejudice. Here is a complete set of anti-Catholic hatreds, almost a parody of them. The crudity of thought is self-condemning.

But what if this revulsion against Polish behaviour is actually justified? Perhaps this inarticulate rage has good historical grounds. Perhaps Professor Gross is right to summon his readers to similar indignation. (This prolonged Polish hostility to Jews was incredibly upsetting to me he says, his emotion somehow justifying his argument.)³¹

That dreadful things happened to Jews is not to be denied. Two episodes to which he devotes much time, the July 1941 massacre at Jedwabne and the July 1946 killings at Kielce are cases in point. Jedwabne, a village in northeastern Poland, had been under Soviet occupation until the Nazis liberated it in July 1941 following Operation Barbarossa. After the German occupation, some 340 Jews were butchered in circumstances truly ghoulish. Once thought that Nazi death squads were responsible, now it seems some local people, egged on by the Nazis, were guilty. Here, surely, is the Polish equivalent of Hitler's Willing Executioners when the shared anti-Semitism of liberator and liberated combined to produce the mass killing of the innocent. Using fairly grotesque logic, Professor Daniel Goldhagen, author of the book of that name, implies as much of Poland as a whole.³²

Jedwabne was indeed a horror but it struggles to carry the interpretative weight that some have placed on it. It happened in a district recently under an utterly barbaric Soviet occupation. The history of that occupation, and of the forced deportations that followed it, can only be written in words of horror. Vast tracts of Eastern Poland were emptied of populations who were sent to live and mainly to die in Siberia or Soviet Central Asia. Between 1939 and 1941 almost half of the one million and a half [deported] Poles were already dead, including 100,000 Polish Jews, among them the Chief Rabbi of Warsaw.³³

(The conditions of their deportation defy description, packed in unheated cattle-wagons for a winter journey of at least 3,000 and in some cases 6,000 miles.) By mid 1941, many small towns of pre-War Eastern Poland were essentially de-Polonized. Thousands of families were broken up, some to live, some to die, many never to see each other again. An entire society was brutalised on Stalin's whim. Such was the context of the Jedwabne massacre. The anti-Communism of the killings was explicit. (A statue of Lenin formed part of a macabre, extemporised ritual). The pogrom was clearly an act of revenge, a great explosion of pent-up fury. It is not to be justified or, if explained, explained away. However, it does invite us to reflect on the frailty and fragility of human communities in extremis.

As Professor Davies suggests, Jedwabne raises the sensitive moral question of those nations, like the Poles, who have every reason to regard themselves as victims yet who discover individuals in their midst who can only be described as criminals.³⁴ It is indeed a sensitive question and demands sensitive answers. Some have attempted to frame the argument appropriately; many have not. At one point in his career, Professor Gross himself asked the right questions. It must be stated unambiguously, he wrote in 1988, that the Red Army's attack on Poland was largely welcomed by Jewish crowds (who saw rescue at hand from possible Nazi extermination).³⁵ Polish Jews, forced to choose between Germans and Russians, chose the Russians every time. Polish Christians, who reposed no such trust in the Soviet regime, did not forget that enthusiasm two years later. As Ewa Thompson has remarked, for Polish Jews to side with the USSR was an act of survival; for Polish Christians, it was an act of treason.³⁶

The killing of Jews in Kielce in July 1946 forms another part of Professor Gross's indictment of the post-War Polish world. The deaths themselves, and the Catholic reaction to them, show the implicit social contract and the blind prejudice at their murky worst. So, at least, he claims. Yet one wonders if Kielce, like Jedwabne, offers such simple certainties. Jews and Poles lived decently together before the War but by 1945

the once substantial Jewish population was reduced to 212. In the immediate aftermath of the fighting Jews had little difficulty recovering abandoned property if it had not been destroyed by the Germans but they were also resented for unwarranted privileges in the institutions of the State. Their relative prosperity was also a source of tension, especially as the hoped-for improvement in economic life did not happen and most especially because some who had sold their restored property now planned to leave. (This seemed like cashing in.) Above all, Jews were identified with Sovietism.³⁷ This was true of the country as a whole. In the last days of the War and the first days of peace, a number of assaults on Jews took place in various parts of Poland, Kielce no exception. The resulting loss of life, although deplorable, was on an extraordinarily small scale compared to the brutalisation of the country as a whole for the previous six years. What Adam Zamosycki has called one of the most savage programmes of human and cultural destruction in the annals of mankind³⁸ had just taken place. In immediate aftermath of war, the everyday threat to life and limb, the difficulties of earning a living, the pauperisation of the entire society, ubiquitous cases of theft (sometimes treated as patriotic deeds) all weakened the ... constraining power of morality. It was only a small step from this, writes Stanislaw Meducki, to widespread lawlessness.³⁹

Poland lost the War twice occupied at the beginning, ravaged throughout, abandoned at the end. A fair-minded assessment would see more criminality than anti-Semitism in the events immediately following the War, although anti-Semitism was certainly drummed up by political agitators. A feeble State apparatus, resented by a substantial sector of Polish society, found it impossible to cope with incipient social collapse. Jews, closely identified with the new Soviet authorities, made easy targets for a small number of thugs. The killings originated in outlandish rumours, circulating for days, that Christian children had been murdered by Jews. The origin of the rumours, and the extent to which they were fanned by the local militia, by political parties eager to discredit each other, even by the Soviet authorities, has been widely debated. It is an exceptionally tangled story. One way or another, though, a crowd of about 150 people forced itself into the house where some of the few remaining Jews of Kielce lived. There they killed them.

Some saw Soviet collusion in the murders as a means of discrediting the local Catholic population and justifying the continuing occupation of the country. Others claimed that the massacre had been instigated by the Polish Workers Party to discredit the Polish Peasant Party. Others saw the hand of the local bishop and his priests. (This at least is disprovable: the bishop was out of town and priests were forbidden to approach the scene.)⁴⁰ Only in recent years has archival material shown the truth or falsity of some of these claims, and even now the story remains only partially told.

Professor Gross does not trouble too much with the events themselves but with the reaction to them, which he sees as proof of Catholic clergy washing their hands of a crime of which they may have secretly approved. How does he reach this conclusion? At one level it seems a strange judgment. Bishop Theodor Kubina of Czestochowa, for instance, condemned the killings in the strongest terms. We appeal to all, he said, to combat with all your strength all the attempts to organize anti-Jewish excesses . . . We trust that responsible citizens will not debase themselves by raising their hands against a fellow citizen only because he is of a different nationality and denomination. Acknowledging this, Professor Gross finds fault with the rest of the hierarchy for failing to condemn the killings similarly. The problem, as he sees it, was that although

Cardinal Hlond repudiated the killings as miserable and deplorable he failed to mention that Jews were its victims. Indeed he explicitly denied that the murders were attributable to racism. Professor Gross dismisses this condemnation as a kind of *pro forma* professional duty. Its moral force, he thinks, is blunted by Hlond's observation that Jews occupying leading positions within State institutions were to a large extent responsible for the deterioration of good relations between ordinary Poles and their Jewish neighbors. In regrettable armed confrontations ... some Jews unfortunately perish but the number of Poles perishing is incomparably greater. Here, according to Professor Gross, is anti-Semitism pure and simple.⁴¹

This is far-fetched. Hlond's poorly judged words played into the hands of the Soviet authorities who wished to de-legitimise the Polish Catholic Church after the war. On the other hand, the unvarnished record is plain enough. He did condemn the killings quite emphatically. He pointed out that numerous Jews in Poland [owed] their lives to Poles and Polish priests.⁴² He deplored the collapse of good relations between Christians and Jews. He denied any anti-Semitism on his own part. All of this, according to Professor Gross, is proof of his anti-Semitism or, at least, that of his advisers.⁴³ It seems an extraordinarily capacious definition of anti-Semitism upon which to build a case for widespread, lethal and untamed hatred towards Jews in post-War Poland.

The suspicion grows that, for Professor Gross, almost any argument will do to reinforce Catholic complicity in crimes of hatred. As proof of the faithlessness of the Polish clergy he quotes a banality of Father Josef Tischner that might have been said at any time in the history of the church.⁴⁴ As proof of clerical malevolence he speaks of the ritual murder of Jewish children by Catholic priests who baptized infants without permission.⁴⁵ (How many children thus ritually murdered he does not say.) As proof of national psychosis a sort of collective hallucination by which any absurdity might be believed of Jews and then acted upon he offers a few observations from those disposed to think in such terms. None of this, of course, is proof of anything, except, perhaps, the circularity of Professor Gross's reasoning and the coarseness of his intuitions.

IV

It would be easy to argue, then, that Professor Gross presents his evidence in a tendentious manner. He reads unambiguous conclusions into manifestly ambiguous episodes, hardly pausing to consider that there might be a case to be made for the other side. He has helped shape public understanding of morally complex matters and yet moral complexity is precisely what he seems to lack. The same is true of his followers. Piling footnote upon footnote, document upon document, they never seem to understand the world they claim to interpret. Perhaps, in the end, they are not really historians at all. After all, there seems something curiously unhistorical, even anti-historical, about a project designed to present Polish anti-Semitism as a disease or a deformity, as a mental illness, as a national savagery, as something best described in metaphors either biological or zoological. Hostility to Jews is always virulent⁴⁶ or, as one recent correspondent to *The Times Literary Supplement* put it, a terrible beast in the Polish basement.⁴⁷ This is not the language of sober scholarship, nor, one must conclude, is it ever intended to be. The elucidation of careful distinctions is nowhere to be found because it was nowhere sought in the first place. You can't generalize about the Poles, wrote Yitzhak Zuckerman, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt. There were some who helped Jews only for money, others who were actively

collaborationist, some involved in blackmail. But there were also decent and pure people among them as among other nations, people who risked their lives and sacrificed their safety, ... people who knew that their job was to rescue, that was their human obligation. Some of them were simple folk who were content to receive pennies and saved Jews simply out of human kindness; and even when the Jews ran out of money, they went on supporting them ... There were all kinds of Poles.⁴⁸ For Professor Gross, though, there is only one kind of Pole. He might do well to listen to some Jewish wisdom, from the heart of the ghetto, not about Poland but about human beings.

One irony is obvious. The stereotype of the Polish Anti-Semite represents a strange, mimetic tribute to the very techniques of propaganda that justified killing Jews in the first place. Another group is being totalized, vilified, slandered. Another group is made ready for political conquest by being deprived of dignity and moral standing. Another group is rendered unfit in the eyes of the world and dismissed when it pleads for spiritual independence. This may not be the intention but it is surely the effect. And there is another paradox. Professors Gross and Goldhagen have made a stock-in-trade of collective guilt, describing a culture of anti-Semitism so ingrained that it led to genocide, to wholesale theft, to a conspiracy of silence and shame after the fact. This collective guilt, this culture of anti-Semitism, brings ruin to their argument. It destroys human agency at the very moment it claims to establish it. Extending and distending causation, wallowing in generality, content with glibness, it disables moral precision at the point when moral precision is most necessary.

In a recent issue of *Central Europe Review*, for example, Christopher Orlet condemned the anti-Semitism of many individual priests in today's Poland, singling out the reaction of Cardinal Jozef Glemp to the massacre at Jedwabne. The Cardinal acknowledged that death by immolation of some of the Jewish population was incontestable. However, he rejected the idea that the Polish nation as a whole should accept responsibility for the massacre. That rejection was grounded on logic, common sense, and a crucial awareness that the very enormity of the crime demands that those responsible should be condemned for it. But this was a cold response, Orlet suggested. Every anti-Semitic Pole, he implies, helped strike the matches. Indeed, because of the refusal to accept national responsibility, Polish guilt for Jedwabne continues. This is bizarre reasoning. It condemns everyone for the massacre except those directly responsible for it. Poles long dead and those not yet born set the fire. The killers themselves were mere vessels.⁴⁹ And the more vigorously Poles deny their collective guilt, he implied, the more certainly they affirm it. To criticise Gross's work is to assert its truth that Poles have a guilty conscience (either about killing Jews or stealing their property) and cannot bear to have it exposed. Kafka would have been at home in this topsy-turvy world when a condemnation becomes an affirmation and degrees of sorrow and joy are measured by a thermometer. Glemp's cold response had the virtue of moral intelligence. Lying in the name of warm feelings is not his job. Yet critics think he should accept, with cheerful equanimity, the idea (as Professor Gross puts it) that Catholic priests could have forbidden their parishioners [to kill Jews] ... In every district where the voice of its representatives was not heard, the Church became complicitous in murderous assaults by Polish Catholics against their Jewish neighbors.⁵⁰ Here is historical logic that would shame a first-year undergraduate. Apparently it does not shame the Norman Tomlinson Professor of War and Society at Princeton University.

The cruelest paradox of all is this. Professor Gross imposes on his critics a burden he explicitly renounces for himself. To answer a prejudice, he tells us, one is forced, albeit reluctantly, to accept its premises. Those who defend Poland face precisely that problem. When anti-Semitism is taken as normative, all efforts to answer it sound immediately like special pleading a series of excuses. Exculpatory evidence, after all, assumes culpability in the first place. Those thousands of Poles who risked their lives (and, in some cases, lost them) to save Jews? A small minority who, in any case, were secretive because they knew their neighbours would ostracise them.⁵¹ Those priests who condemned anti-Semitism and the expropriation of Jews? Unrepresentative of the prejudice and greed of the clerical majority.⁵² The fact that Poles were the first victims of the Nazis and did not wish to see their country invaded? An unexpected and uninvited opportunity to prey on their neighbors.⁵³ Jews as Communists? A myth as outlandish as Jews as Vampires. And so it proceeds. The list of offences eventually becomes so wearisome that even the accuser himself seems to tire of them, offering a few minor emendations to his own charge sheet as if to convey at least the Appearance of balance. That cause is long lost. The real offense is to a sense of fairness, of decency, of logic, of mature historical understanding, of moral imagination. It is, in sum, a lamentable and disgraceful performance.

Describing what he sees as the collective mania of Poland's anti-Semites, he concludes that such mind boggling concoction[s] offer proof that once a narrative breaches the boundary of nonsense and can no longer be tamed by reasoned argument, anything goes.⁵⁴ Professor Gross, know thyself.

1 New York Times Book Review, 11 March 2007. Judt is careful to say that others might argue this view, thus distancing himself from a position he seems to endorse. Of course, the silence itself is taken for granted.

2 Again, Judt shields himself from moral responsibility by quoting but not Necessarily endorsing this view.

3 For a time, Professors Gross and Judt were colleagues at New York University.

4 Professor Gross, born in Warsaw in 1947 of a Jewish father and Catholic mother, describes his upbringing as that of the secular liberal intelligentsia. The worst of Stalinism was over by the end of his childhood and he benefited, he said, from the liberalization of the communist regime. He and his family emigrated from Poland to the United States after his release from a five-month prison sentence for participating in the student protest movement of 1968. Princeton Weekly Bulletin, March 26, 2007.

5 Norman Davies, Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present (Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 100.

6 Norman Davies, Gods Playground: A History of Poland Volume II 1795 to the present (Columbia University press, 1982), p. 393.

7 What at all events is certain is that an independent Poland would not

be viewed favourably in Germany because it would produce an independent German Poland and a discontented and rebellious Polish population in North Germany. One has only to read Bismarck's Memoirs to see that one of the keynotes of his policy was a friendship with Russia based on common interests and action with regard to Poland. Maurice Baring, *A Year in Russia* (London, 1907), p. 41.

8 Michal Sliwa, *The Jewish Problem and Polish Socialism* in Antony Polonsky et al. (eds.), *Polin: Jews, Poles, Socialists* (London, 1996), p. 1516.

9 Michal Sliwa, p. 53.

10 Norman Davies, *Gods Playground: A History of Poland, Volume II: 1795 to the present* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1982), pp. 411-412.

11 The Jewish shop-worker was often at odds with the Jewish shop-owner. Jewish trades unionists attacked Jewish entrepreneurs ... The conflict between the old and the young was often intertwined in the struggle between tradition and transformation. Davies, p. 54.

12 Simon Segal, *The New Poland and the Jews* (Lee Furman, Inc. New York, 1938) p. 185.

13 Simon Segal, pp. 182-184.

14 Quoted Michal Sliwa, *The Jewish Problem and Polish Socialism*, in Antony Polonsky et al., (eds.), *Polin: Jews, Poles, Socialists* (London 1996), p. 25.

15 Anna Landau-Czajka, *The Image of the Jew in the Catholic Press* in Antony Polonsky et al., (eds.) *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry: Jews in Independent Poland, 1918-1939* (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford and Portland, Oregon, 1994, 2004), p. 175.

16 Italics added.

17 Anna Landau-Czajka, p. 172.

18 Anna Landau-Czajka, p. 173.

19 Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics from the Great War to the War on Terror* (HarperCollins, 2007), p. 338.

20 Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (Princeton University Press, 2006), xiv.

21 One of his odder notions, for instance, is that secular Jews in interwar Poland had no alternative but to become Socialists and Communists, other avenues of Political involvement closed to them. This is, of course, a circular argument leading to a circular conclusion: that it was Poland that made them Communists, not the other way around. Gross, p. 241.

22 Jan T. Gross, xiii.

23 Jan T. Gross, p. 36, footnote.

24 Jan T. Gross, p. 82.

25 Jan T. Gross, p. 72.

26 Jan T. Gross, p. 151.

27 Jan T. Gross, pp. 152-153.

28 Jan T. Gross, p. 247.

29 Jan T. Gross, p. 247.

30 Jan T. Gross, p. 247.

31 Princeton Weekly Bulletin, March 26, 2007.

32 In September 1942, for instance, a German sergeant was killed by Polish Partisans in an ambush near the village of Talcyn. This was the first casualty suffered by Police Battalion 101 which had been in Poland for three months and was already complicit in the killing of twenty thousand Jews. The three hundred Polish inhabitants of the village were rounded up but only seventy eight were shot. The commander of the battalion, Major Wilhelm Trapp, wept as he ordered their deaths and then proceeded to slaughter another 180 Jews in a neighboring village. Goldhagen draws a moral: And it was not just Trapp who was disturbed by the killing of Poles. Some of the men expressed the desire not to undertake any more missions of this sort. Trapp also, in an act of solicitude never shown towards Jewish victims, sent one of his men to calm the women, holed up in a schoolroom, whose husbands the Germans were shooting. The Germans acted that day as if some Nazi rule of thumb guide them, namely that no mass slaughter should be visited on a population without available Jews falling lifeless as well ... When compared to the obvious distaste and reluctance shown by Police Battalion 101 in its comparatively small scale revenge killings of Poles, the men's zealous and dedicated slaughtering of Jews stands in sharp relief ... Goldhagen explains the remorse. Non-Jewish Poles were potential allies in the killing of Jews. After all, the Germans extermination of Polish Jewry ... was common knowledge... the Poles knowledge of [it] was extensive ... The gassing of Jews was an open secret [in Poland]. Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (Alfred Knopf, New York 1996), pp. 240-244.

33 Norman Davies, *Gods Playground*, Volume II, p. 451.

34 *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 March, 2001, p. 21.

35 Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 29.

36 Ewa Thompson, Reflections of Richard Lukass The Forgotten Holocaust, in The Sarmatian Review, XV, April 1998, p. 536.

37 Stanislaw Meducki, The Kielce Pogrom, 4 July 1946 in Antony Polonsky et al., (eds.), Polin: Jews, Poles, Socialists (London 1996), p. 163.

38 Adam Zamoyski, Poland: A Travellers Gazette (John Murray, London, 2001), p. 23.

39 Adam Zamoyski, p. 23.

40 Stanislaw Meducki, The Kielce Pogrom, 4 July 1946 in Antony Polonsky et al., (eds.), Polin: Jews, Poles, Socialists (London 1996), p. 167.

41 Jan Gross, Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Polands Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia (Princeton University press, 1988), op. cit., pp. 137138.

42 Even Professor Gross, albeit reluctantly, concedes the truth of this.

43 Conceivably because of his advanced age and poor health, Hlond was no longer in charge of official business. Younger bishops and his entourage drafted whatever pronouncements he issued to the outside world. Catholic of the old school as he was, this new, ruthless, aggressive anti-Semitism was probably not much to his taste ... Gross, Revolution from Abroad, p. 135.

44 I have never met anyone who has lost his faith after reading Marx or Lenin yet I have met many who have lost faith after meeting with their own parish priest. Quoted Gross, Revolution from Abroad, p. 153.

45 Jan Gross, Revolution from Abroad, p. 162.

46 Tad Szulc, Pope John Paul II: The Biography (Scribner, New York 1995), p. 40.

47 Werner Cohn, Times Literary Supplement, 30 March 2001, p. 21.

48 Martin Gilbert, The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust (Henry Holt, 2003), pp. 157158.

49 Central Europe Review, 23 April, 2001. ce-review.org.

50 Jan T. Gross, Fear, p. 261.

51 Jan Gross, Revolution from Abroad, p. 261.

52 Jan Gross, Revolution from Abroad, p. 261.

53 Jan Gross, Revolution from Abroad, p. 249.

54 Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, p. 245.