

Chapter IV

“Fear” after Jedwabne.

The debate that almost didn’t happen.

1. “Fear” in Poland and in the eyes of historians.

In January 2008, almost eight years after the release of “Neighbors”, Jan T. Gross’s new book, “*Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści*” [English: “Fear; Anti-Semitism in Poland just After the War. The History of Moral Collapse”] appeared on the Polish book market.⁷³⁵ Unlike “Neighbors”, which was first released to Polish readers, “Fear” was originally published in the USA and with a slightly different title: “Fear; Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation”.⁷³⁶ Thus, due to the author’s decision, his critics were prevented from formulating concerns of what could happen to the good name of Poland and Poles after foreigners read the book – concerns which had already been manifested in the debate over the massacre in Jedwabne.

Jan Tomasz Gross’s new book started a debate in the Polish media at the time of its publication in the USA. As a result, before it was released in Poland, “Fear” had already been “promoted”, particularly by the national-Catholic press, reporting the ‘deceitful’ and ‘anti-Polish’ contents of the book. However, other comments and reviews also appeared, including academic texts. Therefore, in the first days of January 2008, when various newspapers announced Jan T. Gross’s new book, “Fear”, to be published by “Znak”, the title was already familiar to many readers and the author’s name well known, particularly after the controversy over the Jedwabne pogrom. While for some it symbolised a breakthrough confrontation with the difficult Polish-Jewish past and the final end to the myth of Polish innocence, for others it was just the synonym for “anti-Polonism”.

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

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

What riveted the attention of the public and critics was that, unlike “Neighbors”, Jan T. Gross’s new book did not reveal any unknown historical facts. This time, the author described different faces of anti-Semitism in Poland in the first years after World War II, based on well-known sources and available publications. As the book dealt with anti-Semitism against Holocaust survivors, the author focused mainly on the postwar wave of anti-Jewish violence in Polish society, which resulted in the deaths of – according to different estimates – of between 500 and 3,000 people.⁷³⁷ Depicting a series of acts of anti-Semitism, Gross included in his book the postwar pogroms in Rzeszow, Cracow and Kielce; murders of Holocaust survivors returning to their hometowns; murders of Jewish repatriates on trains known as “train operations”, conducted mostly by National Armed Forces troops; murder-robberies, political assassinations and other forms of violence. Based on official statements, press articles and private conversations, he also describes the responses to these acts of violence – particularly the Kielce pogrom – by the state, by Catholic Church authorities and by the lay intelligentsia.

However, “Fear” also depicts other manifestations of postwar anti-Semitism, such as the anti-Jewish attitude of local administrations, employment discrimination, anti-Semitism among children, and the antipathy towards Holocaust survivors displayed through words, gazes and gestures within local communities. A separate chapter was devoted to the anti-Semitism nourished by the myth of “Żydokomuna” (Jewish Bolshevism) – and to the deconstruction of this anti-Semitic stereotype, which had long been used as a simple matrix to explain complex reality. Jan T. Gross did not, however, limit his work to a simple reconstruction of facts about different manifestations of postwar anti-Semitism. On the contrary, in accordance with the English subtitle of his book – “An Essay In Historical Interpretation” – the author attempted to diagnose the causes of this phenomenon and to interpret the constellation of events documented in his book. It was mostly these that caused the greatest controversies among his adversaries.

In Gross’s opinion – and not only his – the causes of anti-Semitism and violence against Jews in Poland between 1944 and 1949 can be traced to a few different sources. First of all, as a result of the Holocaust, Poles came into possession of various Jewish properties – from small objects of everyday use to properties: flats, shops, workshops, etc. Therefore, quoting Elżbieta Janicka who aptly summarised Gross’s thoughts: “postwar anti-Semitism (as a legitimising mechanism) was an effect of the nationwide process of growing rich ‘on

737 See. D. Engel, *Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946*, *Yad Vashem Studies* 1998, no. 26, p. 43-47; J. Michlic, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland 1918-1938 and 1945-1947*, “Polin” 2000, v. 13, p. 34-61.

Jews”⁷³⁸ and the violence against them became a specific tool to defend newly acquired assets. Holocaust survivors returning to their hometowns were treated with distrust and hostility by non-Jewish Poles, including those who formed the “Polish Third Estate”, “which did not exist before”. They “completely took over trade, supplies, mediation and local crafts in the provinces”.⁷³⁹ The homecoming of Holocaust survivors also frightened those who needed to return Jewish assets that had once been deposited with them, either because they no longer had them or simply did not want to give them back.

Another underlying cause of postwar anti-Semitism and violence against Jews suggested by Gross has its source in the hatred towards a hurt victim. The author, referring to Tacitus, noted that “it is, indeed, human nature to hate the man whom you have injured”⁷⁴⁰. Such hatred afflicted Jews as the targeted victims of Nazism. Their very existence reminded of the inglorious attitudes of non-Jewish Poles towards Holocaust: complicity, indifference, and passiveness. As Gross noted: The Jews who survived the war were not threatening just because they reminded those who had availed themselves of Jewish property that its rightful owners might come back to reclaim it. They also induced fear in people by reminding them of the fragility of their own existence, of the propensity for violence residing in their own communities (...) [and] because it called forth their own feeling of shame and of contempt in which they were held by their victims”.

Finally, the last cause of postwar anti-Semitism highlighted by Gross was getting “infected with anti-Semitism”⁷⁴¹ during the war. Not only did the Nazis infect Poles with anti-Semitic propaganda, but they also showed to Polish witnesses of the Holocaust that Jews could be humiliated, mistreated and killed with impunity and that their lives were ‘completely worthless’. According to Gross, “mass killings of Polish Jews, as well as of those Jews who resided east of Poland, took place in situ (...) in countless small towns where a few hundred or a few thousand Jews were confined to their neighbourhoods”. Polish society, the author notes, “proved vulnerable to totalitarian temptation”⁷⁴².

“Fear” included a few more of the author’s thoughts that brought controversy and were the focus of the attention of his critics, such as his reflections on the indifference of the majority of Poles towards the Holocaust happening in front

738 E. Janicka, *Mord rytualny z aryjskiego paragrafu. O książce Jana Tomasz Grossa “Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie. Historia moralnej zapaści”*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 2008, issue 2, p. 231.

739 See J. T. Gross, *Fear...*, p. 47.

740 Ibidem, p. 256.

741 Ibidem, p. 130.

742 Ibidem, ..., p. 260.

of their eyes. In his book, Gross ascertains that “Killings of Jews, (...) were not a secret cloak-and-dagger operation. They were, by all appearances, a form of social control”⁷⁴³. What generated strong emotions was also the term “Catholic National Democrats” used by the author in the Polish version of the book to present a certain “cognitive orientation, according to which the Roman Catholic Church sided strongly with the National Democrats’ worldview. Gross’s criticism of the highest order of the clergy – including Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek and the cardinals Adam Sapieha, August Hlond and Stefan Wyszyński for their silence and ambiguous attitude towards anti-Semitic acts of violence and particularly for their lack of a strong response to the Kielce pogrom – also heated the discussion of “Fear”. More importantly, it is the words written by Gross and the response to them that deserve attention and at least a fragmentary reconstruction and interpretation of the formulated opinions.

The setting of the debate over “Fear” was almost analogous to previous discussions referring to the difficult Polish-Jewish past. The Polish release of “Fear”, like the release of Claude Lanzmann’s films, Jan Błoński’s articles or Gross’s “Neighbors”, was an event that sparked off a public discussion. Therefore, determining its start is not particularly problematic. Nor is demonstrating its clear ending – or, shall we say, its hasty and artificial ending, which was the publication of the materials forming part of the debate such as articles, columns, interviews, and the records of meetings etc. by “Znak publishers”.⁷⁴⁴ In other words, “Znak publishers” somehow attempted to control the beginning and the end of the debate over “Fear”.

Znak had, however, no real influence over elements such as the dynamics, trajectory and contents of the debate over Gross’s new book. Thus, it is important to ask whether debate is even a good word in this context, since it lacked internal dynamics from the very beginning. The participants did not really refer to each other’s texts; dialogism and referentiality were replaced with isolated and unrelated statements. Even though some of the debaters even confessed to not having read Gross’s book, this did not in the least deter them from formulating categorical assertions based on press commentaries and intuition. In response, most contributors legitimised their statements by declaring their knowledge of “Fear”. What is more, the debate over the book definitely lacked texts or statements that could be regarded as key for its trajectory and that would set a reference point for other debaters. What is significant and fascinating at the same time, however, are different attempts to block the debate by the use of various strategies of invalidating the contents of the book, its cognitive value and

743 Ibidem, p. 38.

744 M. Gądek (ed.), *Wokół “Strachu”. Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, Kraków 2008.

its author’s competence, etc. Considering the debate’s progress, timing and outcome, these efforts were somehow successful. Before these strategies are discussed in detail, let us listen to Polish historians and to what they said in interviews, reviews and debates.

Naturally, there is no single, unanimous, collective entity such as “Polish historians”; nor is there any agreed standpoint of a professional association, but rather some dispersed voices of different representatives of this academic discipline. Analysing their opinions, we can see that certain critical comments and objections to Jan Tomasz Gross and his book are similar and repeated by many. Generally they fall into two categories: “It is hard to engage in a rational polemic with such far-fetched statements, expressed in such pungent and categorical words. They may be accepted or dismissed because the dispute is not about facts, which are known and usually unquestionable, but their interpretation and the right to formulate strong accusations based thereon”.⁷⁴⁵ The other is more metaphorical: “The problem is that *The Last Judgement* [a triptych by Hieronymus Bosch – author’s note.] consists of three panels with a few hundred figures and numerous episodes. A glance at just one of these elements not only fails to provide an overall image, but even makes it difficult to understand the element itself”.⁷⁴⁶

A great number of historians emphasised that Jan Tomasz Gross had not introduced any new facts in “Fear” but had only used sources already known to scholars – mostly publications and the latest results of the study conducted by scholars from The Polish Centre for Holocaust Research. The only aspects considered novel by a few historians were the results of Gross’s own desk research concerning the Rzeszow pogrom, which – unlike the Cracow and Kielce pogroms – has not yet been analysed in detail.⁷⁴⁷ However, the lack of independent research and the use of only well-known sources were not always considered to be factors undermining the value of Gross’s book. According to Feliks Tych, a long-term Director of the Jewish Historical Institute, “Fear” introduced its numerous readers to sources which otherwise would have been difficult for them to access.⁷⁴⁸

Since Jan Tomasz Gross had based his analysis on well-known sources, publications and undeniable facts, almost none of the historians taking part in the debate questioned them. This does not mean that no factual mistakes, faults

745 P. Machcewicz, *Zbyt proste wyjaśnienie*, “Więź” 2008, issue 2-3, p. 75.

746 M. Zaremba, *Sąd nieostateczny*, “Polityka” 2008, issue 3, p. 17.

747 See eg. A. Grabski, *Krew brata twego głośno woła ku mnie z ziemi!*, “Kwartalnik Historii Żydów” 2006, issue 3, p. 410.

748 F. Tych, *Wokół książki Jana Tomasza Grossa “Strach”*, “Kwartalnik Historii Żydów” 2008, issue 1, p. 90.

or inaccuracies were found in his work.⁷⁴⁹ While pointing them out was supposed to help preserve “scientific accuracy”, it also served another purpose. Jerzy Jedlicki, Marcin Kula and Andrzej Friszke were certainly right when they observed that all too often the search for mistakes and inaccuracies in “Fear” by pedantic historians was aimed at invalidating the contents and the undertone of the book and averting its moral call – all in the name of self-defence⁷⁵⁰. Similarly, eight years beforehand, there were attempts to devalue “Neighbors” with the use of the same techniques in public discourse.

While the facts presented in “Fear” were not questioned, what was criticised were the author’s interpretations and language. A number of historians pointed out Gross’s tendency to generalise and jump to conclusions, and his predilections for making arbitrary judgements. The language and the tone of the book were often criticised for their accusatory and moralistic character. Gross himself was compared to a prosecutor, judge, moralist or missionary⁷⁵¹ – also by those historians who refused to recognise the academic value of “Fear” for these very reasons. A few, however, considered this language and these strong statements to be a virtue and not a disadvantage of Gross’s work. Naming important, reliable, balanced and unemotional works concerning similar issues, they argued that no one would take any interest in them except a narrow circle of experts. They had not ever been a subject of public debate (even though they deserved to be) and thus never got a chance to gain such a significant number of readers as

749 For example, Bożena Szaynok, a historian and a scientific consultant of the Polish edition of “Fear”, pointed out the author’s mistakes and incorrect interpretations. However, she and Paweł Machniewicz found only one substantial mistake. The diary of Józef Kuraś, a guerrilla leader from Podhale, was forged and Gross should have known that. See A. Klich, *Gross – moralista, a nie historyk*, an interview with B. Szaynok, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 25 I 2008, p. 25; P. Machcewicz, *Zbyt proste wyjaśnienie*, “Więź” 2008, issue 2-3, p. 77.

750 See J. Jedlicki, *Tylko tyle i aż tyle*, “Tygodnik Powszechny” 2008, issue 4; A. Friszke, *Gross i chłopcy narodowcy*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 23-24 II 2008, p. 28; M. Kula, *Obrońcy swoich*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 16 II 2008, p. 21.

751 See F. Tych, *Wokół książki Jana Tomasza Grossa “Strach”*, “Kwartalnik Historii Żydów” 2008, 1, p. 90; A. Stempin, *Czy należy bać się “Strachu”?*, “Znak” 2008, 6, p. 126, 128; A. Klich, *Gross – moralista, a nie historyk*, an interview with B. Szaynok, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 25 I 2008, s. 25; *Gross – historyk z misją. Debata “Tygodnika Powszechnego” i TVN 24 o książce Jana Tomasza Grossa “Strach”*, [w:] *Wokół “Strachu”*. *Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, M. Gądek (ed.), Kraków 2008, p. 303; A. Bikont, *Ci nie są z ojczyzny mojej*, an interview with D. Libionka, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 2-3 II 2008, p. 21.

Gross’s books did, in spite of media interest in the subject.⁷⁵² Moreover, the author of “Fear” stated in a television debate that he’d used such rhetoric perfectly consciously for he was convinced that the description of dramatic events requires “equally dramatic presentation”.⁷⁵³

However, the objections formulated by historians towards Gross’s book referred not only to what the book contained but also to what it lacked. In other words, using the above-quoted metaphor of Marcin Zaremba, the objections resembled listing unmentioned “episodes” of “The Last Judgement” by Hieronymus Bosch. According to the majority of historians who participated in the debate, a wider social and political context should be taken into consideration in order to explain the causes of postwar violence against Jews. That is why they regarded the reasons Gross presented as neither exclusive nor satisfactory. Among the causes of the postwar violence that had been belittled or ignored, Paweł Machcewicz, Dariusz Stola, Bożena Szaynok and Marcin Zaremba mentioned war trauma, which could influence postwar behaviour. Other causes listed were the disintegration and atomisation of society; the lack of authorities who could help prevent the violence against Jews; common postwar banditry; an increase in violence and the devaluation of human life; common poverty and hunger; the Polish civil war between supporters and opponents of the new government, during which Jews were killed not as Jews but as representatives of the repressive state apparatus; the general destabilisation caused by the postwar moral condition of Polish society and the unexpected change of the political system.

What is more, and something only a few historians taking part in the debate noticed, Jan Tomasz Gross avoided discussing the political anti-Semitism of the National Radical Camp, which increased its power in the 1930s.⁷⁵⁴ The pre-war national and Catholic press overflowed with political anti-Semitism. It was not compromised during the war and therefore survived it, and must have influenced Polish attitudes toward Jews in the period discussed by Gross. If this context had been considered and honestly presented by the author, maybe the IPN historian Wojciech Muszyński would not have claimed in an interview for “Rzeczpo-

752 See A. Friszke, *Gross i chłopcy narodowcy*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 23-24 II 2008, p. 29; J. Jedlicki, *Tylko tyle i aż tyle*, “Tygodnik Powszechny” 2008, 4.

753 Gross – *historyk z misją. Debata “Tygodnika Powszechnego” i TVN 24 o książce Jana Tomasza Grossa “Strach”*, [in:] *Wokół “Strachu”. Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, M. Gądek (ed.), Kraków 2008, p. 302.

754 See A. Friszke, *Gross i chłopcy narodowcy*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 23-24 II 2008, p. 28; P. Machcewicz, *Zbyt proste wyjaśnienie*, “Więź” 2008, 2-3, p. 82-83.

spolita” that the national camp in interwar Poland “wasn’t anti-Semitic because it wasn’t racist”.⁷⁵⁵

What is more, many historians criticised “Fear” for not including the chapter on the time of the Nazi occupation of Poland and the period afterwards, when the country lay within the Soviet orbit: the chapter opened the American version of “Fear” but was omitted in the Polish edition. Gross rationalised this decision by suggesting that this historical period is well known in Poland while it needed to be properly expounded to the Western reader. The lack of this chapter was deprecated by some historians who claimed that it would have been necessary, if only because of the issue of the complex attitude of Poles towards Jews and the Holocaust and Gross’s accusation of their indifference.

Regardless of the criticism, the historians cited above never doubted the gravity or significance of the subject raised by Jan Tomasz Gross in his latest book. Moreover, referring to this criticism, Marcin Kula asked rhetorically whether “the image depicted by the author would be different if the mistakes disappeared”.⁷⁵⁶ Besides, Feliks Tych posed the question whether, considering the analysis presented in the book, Gross was actually supposed to include all the factors that could influence the postwar murders of Jews. Tych answered this question himself saying: “Let us imagine a detective or a journalist who picked up the trail of a terrible crime committed by a group of people. Must the description take into account the fact that the murderers were poor, politically and morally confused and lacked the feeling of stability? This is an important fact but not a necessary condition to write about the very act of murder and its direct motif. And the motif is one that Gross clearly named”.⁷⁵⁷

Some of the historians who considered generalisation, failed interpretations and language that is too emotional or strong to be the main drawbacks of “Fear” expressed concern that these weak points would give Gross’s critics an opportunity to easily reject and invalidate the contents of the book. They were afraid (sincerely or not) that the subject raised by Gross would be belittled by his own faults. The value of the book was highlighted by Barbara Engelking-Boni, director of the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, who said it concerned “the feeling of harm and how the feeling of harm inflicted does not match the feeling of

755 E. Czaczkowska, *Prymas bal się manipulacji*, an interview with W. Muszyńskim, “Rzeczpospolita” 18 I 2008, p. 16.

756 M. Kula, *Obrońcy swoich*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 16 II 2008, p. 21.

757 F. Tych, *Wokół książki Jana Tomasza Grossa “Strach”*, “Kwartalnik Historii Żydów” 2008, 1, p. 93.

harm suffered. Jews have a strong feeling of harm suffered and Poles do not have any feeling of harm inflicted”.⁷⁵⁸

What may confirm this are statements by some historians who attempted to disparage the value of “Fear” in different ways and thus avoid confrontation with the past described by Gross. What is more, their statements confirm the concerns expressed by those historians who claimed that Gross’s critics would use the weak points of “Fear” to invalidate its key focus and the pedantic search for mistakes would be used to avoid its moral challenge. The scenario once rehearsed during the debate over “Neighbors” was thus reconstructed and the arguments once used by Gross’s declared critics were repeated. As a matter of fact, they were repeated by the same historians who, eight years earlier, had played the roles of the defenders of Polish innocence, primarily Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Piotr Gontarczyk, Bogdan Musiał and Jerzy Robert Nowak, supported faithfully by the director of Public Education Office of The Institute of National Remembrance, Jan Żaryn and the president of the institute at the time, Janusz Kurtyka. Jan Żaryn claimed in public that “‘Fear’ should soon be thrown out with the rubbish”;⁷⁵⁹ Janusz Kurtyka called Jan Tomasz Gross “a vampire of historiography” and his book “a libel on Poles”.⁷⁶⁰

As the accusations made by the historians against Jan Tomasz Gross and his book weren’t new, there is no need to reconstruct them. Let us mention the most important ones: Jan Tomasz Gross is not a historian, but a journalist; his research techniques are pitiful and “for years the most characteristic technique used by Gross has been manipulation”;⁷⁶¹ the author uses questionable facts and has not conducted reliable research; “Gross’s book does not leave space for sources that do not support his thesis or for a multipage description of concrete events and their historical context”.⁷⁶² Moreover, “Fear” is regarded as an anti-Polish and anti-Catholic book, which, in Jan Żaryn’s opinion, illustrates a “deep phobia” of the author”.⁷⁶³ The author was even called a “Pole-eater” and a “Catholic-eater” by Jerzy Robert Nowak”.⁷⁶⁴

758 A. Bikont, *Dolary skupują, koty przechowują*, an interview with B. Engelking-Boni, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 16 II 2008, p. 22.

759 After: K. Wiśniewska, *Między ziemią a niebem*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 21 I 2008, p. 19.

760 After “Gazeta Wyborcza” 19-20 I 2008, s. 17.

761 P. Gontarczyk, *Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypisanie łatek*, “Rzeczpospolita” 25 I 2008, p. 16.

762 J. Żaryn, *Pogarda dla kontekstu*, “Rzeczpospolita” 19-20 I 2008, p. 28.

763 Ibidem, p. 29.

764 J. R. Nowak, *Strach pana Pospieszalskiego*, “Nasz Dziennik” 17 I 2008, p. 8; See also J. R. Nowak, *Jak Gross szkaluje Polaków*, “Niedziela” 3 II 2008, p. 32-33; J. R. Nowak, *Jak Gross szkaluje Kościół*, “Niedziela” 27 I 2008, p. 14-15.

However, at least two of the arguments aimed at undermining and refuting the contents of “Fear” were something of a novelty in the discourse involving this group of historians. First of all, some of them considered Gross’s book to be a product of mass culture dealing with the Holocaust, such as Daniel Goldhagen’s book “Hitler’s Willing Executioners” or Hollywood movies such as “Schindler’s List” – a trivialised, pop culture version of the Holocaust which is unreliably documented and offends scientific methods.⁷⁶⁵ Marek Jan Chodakiewicz used this argument, saying that “Gross stopped being an academic and started to be a representative of popular culture, someone like Doda-Elektroda (a popular and controversial Polish singer and celebrity – author’s note)”⁷⁶⁶. According to Chodakiewicz, Gross’s desire to be “on top” can be proven by the fact that he employs “a discourse that worships national minorities” in compliance with the newest global trends; and more precisely, a popular Philo-Semitic discourse used in the struggle for power and influence.⁷⁶⁷

Secondly, Gross’s methodology was somewhat curiously interpreted as applying a postmodern approach, primarily the deconstruction method. Gross was accused of ignoring the truth, facts and sources and focusing only on his theses that determine the whole narration. Such a research perspective was also considered typical of the left-wing American academic milieu.⁷⁶⁸ Its presumed danger was recognised by the historian John Radzilowski, who warned against its application in “Rzeczpospolita”, considering it particularly threatening from the perspective of the history of Poland.⁷⁶⁹

The quoted statements of historians may be interpreted as attempts to reject the contents of the newest Jan T. Gross book and to discredit its author. However, the strategies of invalidation, which consisted of depriving the book of its significance or gravity and belittling its contents in order to reject it in public discourse (as a form of self-defence) are more complex and require special at-

765 See P. Gontarczyk, *Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypinanie latek*, “Rzeczpospolita” 25 I 2008, p. 16; M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Wyzwania badawcze po Zagładzie*, “Rzeczpospolita” 5 IV 2008, p. 29.

766 T. Sommer, *Gross jak Doda!*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, “Czas!” 19 I 2008, p. VII.

767 See T. Sakiewicz, *Gross używa Żydów jako wymówki*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz “Gazeta Polska” 16 I 2008, p. 17.

768 See T. Sakiewicz, *Gross używa Żydów jako wymówki*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, “Gazeta Polska” 16 I 2008, p. 17; M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Skąd się wziął Strach*, “Niezależna Gazeta Polska” 6 VIII 2006, p. 34-35; T. Sommer, *Gross jak Doda!*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, “Czas!” 19 I 2008, p. VII; J. Radzilowski, “*Strach*” i rewizja polskiej historii, “Rzeczpospolita” 1 III 2008, p. 28.

769 J. Radzilowski, “*Strach*” i rewizja polskiej historii, “Rzeczpospolita” 1 III 2008, p. 28.

tention. They will be discussed in two contexts: invalidation of “Fear” by lay and church authorities and invalidation on the grounds of narrative, clichés and rhetorical figures present in public discourse.

2. Invalidating strategies

The best example case of the attempt to invalidate and disparage “Fear” by a public institution was the publication of the so-called “anti-Gross Wunderwaffe” by The Institute of National Remembrance: Marek Jan Chodakiewicz’s book entitled “After Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Relations 1944-1947”.⁷⁷⁰ This publication, provided with a public office’s seal, was released together with Gross’s book, which cannot have been accidental. It was recommended as a reliable alternative and counterweight to the unreliable “Fear”, and a well documented and nuanced study. The foreword, written by the Polish historian Wojciech Roszkowski, as well as the cover note, praised the merits of the book.⁷⁷¹ Yet, the most apologetic advertisement of Chodakiewicz’s book and a defence against its critics was conducted by the historians from The Institute of National Remembrance. The president Janusz Kurtyka praised it in an interview for “Super Express”, saying that “the substance of the book is very good”, that it was written by a “competent historian” in compliance with “the proper methodology for this field”.⁷⁷² Piotr Gontarczyk described “After Holocaust” as a “pioneer work”, an “academic study conveying great factual knowledge” and a complete contrast to Jan Tomasz Gross’s “Fear”, which consisted “mostly of a lack of knowledge and obvious manipulation”.⁷⁷³ The merits of Chodakiewicz’s book were also noted by Jan Żaryn, who constructed his opinion during the opposition to “Fear” and the criticism of its author.⁷⁷⁴ It is worth mentioning that “After Holocaust”

770 See M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947*, Warszawa 2008.

771 Praising his own book and listing the names of those who also praised it, Marek Jan Chodakiewicz confirmed its value with the authority of the author of the preface: “and the preface has been written by professor Wojciech Roszkowski, one of the best historians studying contemporary Poland and one of the few not prostituted during communist times. Would such a recognised scholar advertise my book if it was rubbish, as ‘Tygodnik Powszechny’ has called it? M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Wyzwania badawcze po Zagładzie*, “Rzeczpospolita” 5 IV 2008, p. 29.

772 After B. Szaynok, D. Libionka, *Glupia sprawa*, “Tygodnik Powszechny” 3 II 2008, issue 5, p. 23.

773 See P. Gontarczyk, *Chodakiewicz kontra Gross: przypinanie latek*, “Rzeczpospolita” 25 I 2008, p. 16.

774 See J. Żaryn, *Pogarda dla kontekstu*, “Rzeczpospolita” 19-20 I 2008, p. 28.

was officially promoted in the centres of The Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, Cracow, Kielce, Gdansk and Wroclaw. Moreover, the author himself became popular as Gross's adversary much earlier, when he disparaged the value of "Neighbors". As a matter of fact, between the publications of "Neighbors" and "Fear", Marek Chodakiewicz was silent.

All this "promotion" proved to be outstandingly successful. In bookstore windows, "After Holocaust" and "Fear" were located next to each other as though they were two volumes of the same book. The Internet auction service "Allegro" even offered them as one package. Nevertheless, they had functioned from the very beginning not as two complementary historical works but as specific versions of the truth/false game with the Institute of National Remembrance as an arbiter, symbolic elites as players and remembrance of the past as a stake. Understanding of the rules could be seen in the titles of the articles that encouraged the public to read "After Holocaust": "Hard Facts vs. Conjunction of Reality",⁷⁷⁵ "Truth Like a Bitter Medicine",⁷⁷⁶ "Read Chodakiewicz!"⁷⁷⁷

The book by Marek J. Chodakiewicz had first been released in the USA in 2003, entitled: "After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II".⁷⁷⁸ Its Polish edition was not updated in any way and the only modification was the title, with "Polish-Jewish conflict" replaced by "Polish-Jewish relations". "After Holocaust", described in the "Foreword" by Wojciech Roszkowski as based on "a dissertation recently defended at Columbia University in New York",⁷⁷⁹ obviously intended to raise its academic status, had not been based on any doctoral thesis. The author's PhD thesis concerned the history of Janów Lubelski district, which can be easily checked in the list of dissertations available at the Columbia website.

While "After Holocaust" was often presented as an answer to Gross's "Fear", Chodakiewicz frequently highlighted that it was the other way round: Gross's book was the answer to his book and his thesis. What was interesting, he stressed in public statements, was that Jan Tomasz Gross and himself had long been involved in a "book fight" and that a few years earlier, his answer to "Neighbors" had been released. This book, by the way, was reviewed by the journal "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały" ["The Holocaust. Studies and Ma-

775 G. Eberhardt, *Konkret kontra zaklinanie*, "Tygodnik Solidarność" 25 I 2008, p. 30.

776 B. Urbanowski, *Prawda jak gorzkie lekarstwo*, "Gazeta Polska" 23 I 2008, p. 20-21.

777 K. Brodacki, *Czytajcie Chodakiewicza!*, "Niedziela" 17 II 2008, p. 29.

778 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II*, Boulder, Columbia 2003.

779 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947*, Warszawa 2008, p. 7.

terials”] in the “Curiosa” section.⁷⁸⁰ Although Gross announced he had never read Chodakiewicz’s book, he stubbornly claimed that “Fear” was an answer to “After Holocaust”. What is more, he also claimed that his book should be recognised as the “first monograph on the subject” and that before it “only one pioneer paper by David Engel had come out” and “presented similar conclusions”.⁷⁸¹

What are those conclusions then? I do not intend to provide a detailed review of the book, particularly since many competent and comprehensive ones have already been written.⁷⁸² However, this simple question helps answer another, more important one: why did a public institution such as The Institute of National Remembrance decide to provide “After Holocaust” with its official stamp? Chodakiewicz, in the very first words of introduction to his book, included its key conclusions. Explaining the roots of postwar violence against Jews, the author concluded that it was a response to, first of all, “Jewish communists who fought to establish a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist regime”; secondly, “Jewish avengers who endeavoured to extract justice from Poles who allegedly harmed Jews during the War”; and thirdly, “Jews who attempted to reclaim property confiscated by the Nazis”.⁷⁸³ The whole subsequent narration of the book is subservient to the attempt to prove these assumptions. In other words: what happened to Jews in Poland after the war was what they deserved. As David Engel rightly noted in his review, “One can hear the chorus of Cell Block Tango from the musical ‘Chicago’ – They had it coming! – re-echoing while reading this book”.⁷⁸⁴

What is more, on the basis of his controversial calculations, Chodakiewicz concluded that between 1944-1947 “(...) for self-defence or revenge, persons of

780 This book was published in the USA in 2005. See M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Massacre in Jedwabne*, July 10, 1941: Before, During, and After, East European Monographs, Boulder, CO, 2005; its insightful review was written by Joanna B. Michlic. See J. B. Michlic, *Odwrócenie historycznej prawdy o Jedwabnem*, “Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały” 2007, issue 3, p. 493-505.

781 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Wyzwania badawcze po Zagładzie*, “Rzeczpospolita” 5 IV 2008, p. 29.

782 See B. Szaynok, D. Libionka, *Głupia sprawa*, “Tygodnik Powszechny” 3 II 2008, issue 5, p. 22-23; P. Machcewicz, *Gabinet historycznych osobliwości*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 18 I 2008, p. 24; A. Żbikowski, *Anty-Gross*, “Polityka” 26 IV 2008, p. 76; D. Engel (ed.), Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II*, “Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały” 2005, issue 1, p. 328.

783 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947*, Warszawa 2008, p. 11.

784 D. Engel (rec.), Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust. Polish-Jewish Conflict in the Wake of World War II*, “Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały” 2005, nr 1, p. 326.

Jewish origin acting on their own or in collaboration with Stalinists, snatched on, assaulted and robbed at least 7,000 Poles, killing some of them”.⁷⁸⁵ This announcement was preceded in bold type with a reference to results coming from another study: “In sum, probably a minimum of 400 and a maximum of 700 Jews and persons of Jewish origin were killed in Poland between July 1944 and January 1947”.⁷⁸⁶ Considering that a number of them were killed because of their communist affiliation and some in robberies (although anti-Semitic motivations are also taken into account), the ratio of Poles killed by Jews to Jews killed by Poles seems self-explanatory. The argument has been well summarised in the title from the first page of “Rzeczpospolita”: “The Dispute over Gross’s Book. Poles-Jews: Who Was Afraid of Whom”.⁷⁸⁷

“After Holocaust” is no real alternative to Gross’s findings, but plays an important role: bringing the status of a victim back to Poles. It erases questions raised by “Fear” and removes the difficult truth about Poland’s guilty past from sight. The ready answers to the roots of postwar violence against Jews given by Chodakiewicz do not aggravate in the least, and instead put the reader at ease. Hence the publication of “After Holocaust” may be interpreted as an attempt by the Institute of National Remembrance to hide “Fear” and undermine or devalue the findings of its author. In any case, the publication should be seen as a counter-offensive, prepared beforehand: a validation of a safe and comfortable version of the past and not as a manifestation of concern for “the society” which “should be given an opportunity to confront Gross’s findings with an alternative lecture on the same subject”.⁷⁸⁸ Such a concern should be manifested in a direct dialogue with Gross and not in a book that leaves a lot to be desired, one that completely ignores the postwar pogroms and whose author uncritically quotes such “exotic” researchers as Henryk Pająk, Jerzy Robert Nowak, Czesław Bartnik or Tadeusz Bednarczyk. Thus, not only has the Institute of National Remembrance legitimised the authority of Marek Chodakiewicz but indirectly also these authors, whose writings are often openly anti-Semitic.

What is more, the invalidation of “Fear” by secular authority was implemented literally and legally in spring 2007 in the form of a penalty law paragraph (132a) introduced on the initiative of the League of Polish Family party (supported in the parliament by the Self Defence and Law and Justice parties):

785 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Po Zagładzie. Stosunki polsko-żydowskie 1944-1947*, Warszawa 2008, p. 206.

786 *Ibidem*, p. 205.

787 See “Rzeczpospolita” 11 I 2008, p. 1.

788 That is how Jan Żaryn explained the decision of the Institute of National Remembrance in answering the bruising critique by Bożena Szayok and Dariusz Libionka. See J. Żaryn, *W sprawie głupiej sprawy*, “Tygodnik Powszechny” 10 II 2008, p. 27.

“Anyone who publicly defames the Polish nation for having participated in organising or being responsible for communist or Nazi crimes shall be punished with imprisonment for up to three years”. The initiators of this proposal emphasised that its purpose was to protect the good name of Poland and Poles from unfair wording appearing in the foreign media such as: “Polish concentration camps”.

However, it should be noted that while the necessity of the proposal was being discussed and the legal works were in progress, the American version of “Fear” had already premiered and first voices against it could be heard in Poland. It was this book that some initiators of this proposal openly referred to when suggesting Gross could be put into prison after the introduction of the new law. Also, Gross as a “revisionist” featured in the parliamentary speech of Mateusz Piskorski, representing the Self Defence Party.⁷⁸⁹ In this way, interestingly, Jan Tomasz Gross has been ‘honoured’ with a law paragraph created especially for him. However, before the new rule could be used against him, it had been reported to the Constitutional Court for Judicial Review by the Civic Ombudsman Janusz Kochanowski for the abuse of the freedom of speech and scientific research. It had not been reviewed by the court before the Polish release of “Fear”.

It had been known since 2006 that the prosecution would be interested in Gross’s “Fear”. At this point, the Public Prosecutor General Deputy, Jerzy Engelking, promised a group of right-wing senators demanding he prosecute Gross for insulting Polish nation that he would “study the case” and “contingent indictment”.⁷⁹⁰ In January 2008, a few days before the release of “Fear” in Poland, the secretary of the Public Prosecutor General, Ewa Piotrowska, said that “beyond doubt, the Prosecutor will read the new Gross’s book”. And he did.⁷⁹¹ The moment “Fear” came to Polish bookstores, the Cracow District Public Prosecutor Office commenced actions to investigate whether the author had imputed

789 Here is the part of the parliamentary speech by Mateusz Piskorski, in which he justifies the necessity of introducing a new article to the penalty code: “Why is it so important? It is important, for example, in respect of the words of some history revisionists, such as Jan Tomasz Gross, who is just now publishing another book that vilifies the Polish nation. This book, according to the editor, is going to be published in Poland next year and maybe the editor should think twice before the release, considering our new regulations (applause)” Polish parliamentary report from 20 July 2006, 22nd parliamentary session, Warsaw 2006, p. 300.

790 Cyt. za (PAP), *Prokurator przeczyta książkę “Strach”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 8 I 2008, p. 3.

791 Cyt. za J. Stróżyk, *Prokurator przeczyta nową książkę Grossa*, “Rzeczpospolita” 8 I 2008, p. 6.

any participation in Nazi crimes to the Polish nation. These public proceedings were based on the press articles about Gross's book and notifications made by private persons, e.g. the populist politician Andrzej Lepper and the editor Leszek Bubel, known for his anti-Semitic publications. In this way, the reading of "Fear" was handled by prosecutors.

The decision by the Cracow District Public Prosecutor's Office to commence preparatory proceedings concerning the contents of "Fear" provoked another dispute over the unwise law – which not only restricted freedom of speech but also significantly limited and penalised academic research, for example on *szmalcownictwo* [the blackmailing of Jews who were hiding during the war], the Blue Police [collaborationist police in the German occupied area], etc. Most of the debaters criticised the regulation, stressed its nonsensical character and disapproved of the fact that Gross's book was handled by the prosecution. A few open letters in defence of Gross were published in the Polish press. Their signatories were Polish and foreign intellectuals, researchers, etc. who demanded the removal of the regrettable legal article from the penal code. Even Gross's adversaries, including Marek Chodakiewicz, protested against the legal paragraph, thus supporting Gross (however, Chodakiewicz could not resist belittling his book by calling it "journalism"⁷⁹²).

Finally, having read "Fear", Cracow investigators discontinued the proceedings against Gross, finding no grounds to charge him with libel against the Polish nation on the basis of Article 132a of the penal code. They also concluded that the contents of "Fear" allowed them neither to charge Gross with libel against the Polish nation (Article 133) nor with inciting hatred based on national, ethnic, racial, or religious differences (Article 256) which, it turned out, had also been analysed by the prosecution. What's most important here, however, is that for almost a month there was a real possibility that Gross would become the defendant and Poland would be ridiculed worldwide. Indeed, Jan Tomasz Gross was close to becoming a Polish Orhan Pamuk.⁷⁹³

In a country where anti-Semitic and hate-speech magazines, periodicals and books are widely available and the Prosecutor's Office often refuses to open an investigation against their editors or authors, the investigation was launched into

792 M. J. Chodakiewicz, *Nie cenzurować!*, "Rzeczpospolita" 21 I 2008, p. 14; see also T. P. Terlikowski, *Prokuratura nie powinna zajmować się "Strachem"*, "Rzeczpospolita" 12 I 2008, p. 2.

793 The recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature was charged with insulting Turkey's national character as he dared to honestly write about the Armenian genocide, identifying those who were responsible for it.

the case of a historical essay written by a respectable author.⁷⁹⁴ In addition, the accusations cast a shadow over Jan Tomasz Gross and cast doubt upon the credibility of his book.

In a sense, the decision of the Prosecutor’s Office interrupted the discussion by radically redirecting it. Additionally, in common knowledge, the difference between commencing preparatory proceedings and a decision to launch an investigation may have been unclear. What was important for the public was the fact that “Fear” was dealt with by the Public Prosecutor’s Office. Fortunately, however, the debate over Gross’s historical interpretations did not reach the courtroom and the penalty law paragraph reported to the Constitutional Court by Civic Ombudsman Janusz Kochanowski was declared unconstitutional in 2009.

The invalidation of “Fear” was practised not only by lay institutions such as the Institute of National Remembrance and the Public Prosecutor’s Office. Some statements made by Catholic Church officials are symptomatic of such practice; for example statements by Archbishop Kazimierz Nycz, Józef Życiński, Józef Michalik, and particularly the open letter by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Cracow, Stanisław Dziwisz, to Henryk Woźniakowski, the president of Znak Publishers, which published “Fear”. Cardinal Dziwisz who, due to his close and long-term friendship with Pope John Paul II (“The Polish Pope”), has a special position in Poland (being even sort of a cult figure) wrote in this letter that the reading of “Fear” filled his heart with “great pain” but also that “the press warnings against the claims of this book proved to be right”. When explaining the reasons why he’d written the letter, the Cardinal stated he “could not remain indifferent about the creation of an atmosphere of national tensions in our homeland based on some biased historical data”. He quoted the comments of “the famous analyst and historian” from the Institute of National Remembrance, Jan Żaryn, about Gross not having included the context of the postwar political reality in Poland. However, his key message and reflections are enclosed in the last paragraph of the letter: “The intentions of the book’s author should be more carefully looked at and the decision to publish or not should also be made with extra care in the interest of greater responsibility of our common good, namely Poland. Your task is to spread the truth about history and not to awaken the demons of anti-Polonism and anti-Semitism. Your publishing company could pay more attention to the selection of books presented to the Polish reader, especial-

794 The cases when the prosecution discontinued proceedings against the authors of anti-Semitic publications as well as comprehensive explanations of these decisions have been diligently documented by “Open Republic: The Association Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia”; See: *Przestępstwa nie stwierdzono. Prokuratorzy wobec doniesień o publikacjach antysemickich*, Stowarzyszenie “Otwarta Rzeczpospolita” i Wydawnictwo Nisza, Warszawa 2006.

ly considering the ethical heritage left by the founders. The Christian roots, in which your editorial past was established, oblige you to do so.”⁷⁹⁵

These quotations from Cardinal Dziwisz’s letter give us a glimpse into some of his opinions and assumptions. The Cardinal’s words clearly indicate that Gross’s book does not tell the truth about history, reports historical facts in a selective way and should not be published by a Catholic publisher in the interest of Poland’s good. Most importantly, however, its contents carry threats: it brings national tensions and awakens the demons “of anti-Polonism and anti-Semitism”. No wonder Cardinal Dziwisz’s doubts were raised by Jan Tomasz Gross’s intentions.

The letter addressed to Henryk Woźniakowski is thus both an admonition, addressed to a Catholic publisher, on its duties, roots and mission and also a review of “Fear” written by the Cracow Metropolitan Archbishop. In this review, Cardinal Dziwisz strongly opted for Jan Żaryn’s version of the memory of the past and expressed support for “the press warnings against the claims of this book”.

The letter may be also interpreted as an attempt to shut down the public debate over “Fear”, or prevent it from happening. Admittedly, the Polish journalist Tomasz Terlikowski, who identified with the Cardinal’s voice, announced in “Rzeczpospolita” that the letter “was not aimed at closing the debate but reminding us what a real dialogue should consist of”,⁷⁹⁶ but such a diagnosis seems to be erroneous and untimely. One possible meaning and aim of the letter (to some extent also a result) was uncovered a month after its publication by another Polish journalist, Rafał Ziemkiewicz. Referring to the earlier book by Gross, he stated: “This time the pamphlet was received calmly, knowing its real value – most Poles shared the view of Cardinal Dziwisz rather than the one held by ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’” journalists, and they forgot about the whole case. For a long time, it’s been only the latter who has regularly devoted a few columns to the ‘debate’ over the book”.⁷⁹⁷ Therefore, even if cutting off the debate over “Fear” was not the principal aim of the Cracow Metropolitan Archbishop, the contents of his letter fully led one to conclude that there was nothing to discuss, or even that such a discussion was inadvisable as it could wake up demons. Through his letter, Cardinal Dziwisz joined the group of those undermining Gross’s book and he rejected the challenge it had posed. Most importantly, he gave this group significant support with the power of his authority. However,

795 *List Otwarty kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza*, [in:] *Wokół Strachu*, M. Gądek (ed.), Kraków 2008, p. 74-75.

796 T. P. Terlikowski, *Odwaga kardynała Dziwisza*, “Rzeczpospolita” 18 I 2008, p. 2.

797 R. A. Ziemkiewicz, *Jesteśmy skazani na bezsilność*, “Rzeczpospolita” 20 II 2008, p. 15.

not everyone enthusiastically welcomed Cardinal Dziwisz’s letter, or quoted it to confirm and mostly strengthen their own views.⁷⁹⁸ A low-key, humble answer, dismissing the accusations against “Znak” Publishers, was submitted as an open letter by Henryk Woźniakowski.⁷⁹⁹

Other disputers also expressed remarks critical of the Metropolitan Archbishop’s letter. One of those surprised by Dziwisz’s letter was Jan Tomasz Gross, who expressed his desire to meet the cardinal and discuss all the controversies around his book in person. Such a meeting never came to pass, however.

As for the Archbishop’s letter, it had another aspect worth mentioning. In writing about awakening the “demons of anti-Polonism and anti-Semitism”, not only did he equate two irrelevant and disproportionate phenomena, but apparently also suggested that the problem of anti-Semitism would not even exist if it were not evoked. Or perhaps the other way round: the problem may exist but should not be not raised but cured with silence.⁸⁰⁰ Anyway, the Metropolitan Archbishop could have personally realised how serious the problem of anti-Semitism was by listening to Jerzy Robert Nowak, the ideologue of “Radio Maryja” [a Catholic Polish radio station] and “the tribune of anti-Semitic Poland”.⁸⁰¹ It was on 9 February 2008 that his peculiar tour around Poland, containing hateful, anti-Semitic lectures against “Gross’s new lies”, started in Cracow.⁸⁰² Thousands of listeners attended his lectures, which often took place in churches, parish centres or divinity schools. The inaugural meeting in Cracow was held in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, where the participants could hear from Prof. Bogusław Wolniewicz that “Jews are attacking us” and

798 Naturally, some commentators criticism the publisher of “Strach” went much further than Cardinal Dziwisz, whom they fully supported.

799 See *Odpowiedź Henryka Woźniakowskiego na List Otwarty kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza*, [w:] *Wokół Strachu*, M. Gądek (red.), Kraków 2008, s. 76-78.

800 Another member of the Polish episcopate, Archbishop Józef Michalik, wrote in his letter for Lent about “Fear” as including unfair accusations against Poland and Poles of “their alleged anti-Semitism” and about his suspicions that Gross meant to “intentionally awake anti-Semitism, against which we should defend ourselves”. The letter was read out on the first Sunday of Lent in the parishes of Przemyśl Archdiocese. Citation after E. Czaczkowska, *Abp Michalik o szatanie i in vitro*, “Rzeczpospolita” 3 III 2008, p. 6.

801 It was Marta Cobel-Tokarska who called Jerzy Robert Nowak “the tribune of anti-Semitic Poland”. This term was used in her article devoted to Nowak’s lecture tour of Poland – a crusade against Gross’s books. See M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bo “Żydzi nas atakują”... Tournée Jerzego Roberta Nowaka z wykładami potępiającymi “antykatolicką i antypolską książkę” Grossa*, “Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały” 2008, issue 4, p. 631-635.

802 See J. R. Nowak, *Nowe kłamstwa Grossa*, Warszawa 2006.

“we must defend ourselves”.⁸⁰³ What they heard from Jerzy Robert Nowak is easy to guess – his articles in “Nasz Dziennik” and “Niedziela” newspapers are clear enough, as are newspaper reports of meetings with him.⁸⁰⁴ For instance, in an interview for “Nasz Dziennik” (17/18 May 2008), he boasted of his speeches given in 37 towns and cities; each meeting gathered between 100 and 2,000 people, who gave him a standing ovation that was reported even by “Gazeta Wyborcza”.⁸⁰⁵

The Metropolitan Archbishop of Cracow, Stanisław Dziwisz, however, never decided to refer to what Jerzy Robert Nowak was propagating in such a formal and loud way as he did in his open letter to Henryk Woźniakowski. Nor did he ever answer the letter addressed to him by Abraham Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), who was concerned by the anti-Semitic character of Nowak’s appearance in Cracow. Considering Dziwisz’s concern over “waking the demons of anti-Semitism” and the fact that the “tour” started in the capital of Dziwisz’s Metropolis, his silence remains intriguing. In any case, it casts doubt on the honesty of the Archbishop’s intentions and confirms that there were other motivations behind his reproachful letter.

Silence as an answer to Nowak’s lectures throughout Poland was also chosen by the Senate of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, which had earlier expressed indignation over Gross’s statement about the anti-Semitism of the cardinals Adam Sapieha and Stefan Wyszyński. Besides, only a few priests and Church officials strongly and publicly criticised Nowak’s speeches, their content, location and the applauding audiences.⁸⁰⁶ That criticism came from the Warsaw management of Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej (KIK; Polish: Club of Catholic Intellectuals),⁸⁰⁷ the Association against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia “Open Republic:”, Zbigniew Nosowski in the name of the

803 Cit. after P. Piotrowski, M. Niemczyńska, *Żydzi nas atakują! Trzeba się bronić*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 11 II 2008, p. 1, 5.

804 During his lectures, Jerzy Robert Nowak attacked not only Jan Tomasz Gross, but also other “enemies of Poland and what is Polish”, by which he meant some members of Polish elites and whom he listed.

805 P. Tunia, *Dokonuje się przełom świadomości*, an interview with J. R. Nowak, “Nasz Dziennik” 17-18 V 2008.

806 See M. Cobel-Tokarska, *Bo “Żydzi nas atakują”... Tournee Jerzego Roberta Nowaka z wykładami potępiającymi “antykatolicką i antypolską książkę” Grossa, “Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały”* 2008, issue 4, p. 634 635.

807 It is worth noticing that the appeal of the KIK management sparked an internal conflict, which resulted in a letter from members criticising the management for speaking in the name of the whole association. See C. Gmyz, *List w obronie pluralizmu w KIK, “Rzeczpospolita”* 19 IV 2008, p. 5.

Polish Council of Christians and Jews, and numerous journalists. However, even their polyphonic voice was not as audible as that one letter by Cardinal Dziwisz.

Although Jerzy Robert Nowak’s lectures unequivocally contributed to the process of devaluing “Fear”, it is worth analysing different strategies used by many journalists with the same purpose. Therefore, let us have a closer look at the character of the plots and of the rhetoric of the figures trying to disparage “Fear”.

As with the case of “Neighbors”, critics attempted to have the book dismissed as invalid by belittling its author. However, analysis of press content indicates that the repertoire did not change and practically nothing new was said. It was repeated that Gross is not a historian and has not acquired history methodology, which naturally discredits both him as a scholar and his book. Some journalists, like certain historians, stressed that Gross was not motivated by a desire to research, understand and describe the past, but by a mission. Thus, he was called a moralist, a prophet, a missionary, but also a prosecutor and a judge. Some questioned Gross’s honesty and frankness, claiming that his main motivation was a desire to earn money with “Fear”. Similarly, Gross was identified as a “tool of Holocaust Enterprise” attempting to finagle Poland out of former Jewish properties and compensations. Attempts to discredit Gross were again made by Antoni Zambrowski who wrote: “Janek Gross – ranked among the leaders of the Polish March 1968 protests – was one of the very few who were broken during interrogation and who “gave away his colleagues” while most “refused to testify”.⁸⁰⁸ It’s worth mentioning that Zambrowski wrote these words a month before the fortieth anniversary of March 1968.

In their attempts to undermine Gross’s position as a scholar, some (such as the journalist Marek Chodakiewicz) even compared him to the pop star Doda or called him the “Britney Spears of historiography”.⁸⁰⁹ Such comparisons were rather incidental, however. Much more often, radical views were ascribed to Gross and he was compared to the Holocaust denier David Irving or Leszek Bubel, a Polish politician and journalist seething with anti-Semitism. This was clearly an attempt to give Gross the status of a fanatic and radical who did not deserve to be treated seriously. The author was also depicted as a stranger who, by definition, is suspicious and hostile. Moreover, the image of a stranger was strengthened by stressing the Jewish roots of the author and the fact that since 1968, when he left Poland, he has been living in the USA. What seems interesting here is that Marek Chodakiewicz, also living permanently in the USA, has

808 A. Zambrowski, *Wojna niechwalebna*, “Gazeta Polska” 6 II 2008, p. 19.

809 See T. Sommer, *Gross i idioci*, “Czas!” 9 II 2008, p. III; T. Sommer, *Gross jak Doda!*, an interview with M. J. Chodakiewicz, “Czas!” 19 I 2008, p. VII.

never been considered a stranger.⁸¹⁰ Gross, however, is easily thought of as an American Jew to whom anti-Polish intentions can be attributed on the basis of common knowledge and stereotypes. One such attempt to strengthen the image of Gross as a Jewish stranger was, for instance, publishing the picture of the author wearing a Jewish Kippah the first page of “Super Express” newspaper, or numerous caricatures showing a striking aesthetic resemblance to those in the anti-Semitic magazine “Der Sturmer” that were published in “Super Express” and “Nasz Dziennik”. Jewish Gross lost his credibility as an author since he must be biased, speaking in the name of his nation and taking on the victims’ perspective.

All these strategies and procedures had already been worked out 8 years earlier, in the debate over the Jedwabne Pogrom. What was new about the “Fear” debate, however, were quasi-psychoanalytical interpretations of the language and contents of the book (and other books by Gross about Polish-Jewish relations) based on the author’s personal experience and biography. The best illustration of this is the article by Piotr Zychowicz, published by “Rzeczpospolita” and entitled “Face to Face with the Mob”, consisting mostly of ostensibly nuanced statements by people declaring their acquaintance with Jan Tomasz Gross.⁸¹¹ What can we learn from it? A few interconnected answers to the question as to why Jan Tomasz Gross had decided to discuss Polish-Jewish relations and how he had approached the subject. According to the first version, during his stay in the USA Gross’s painful experience was that his earlier books devoted to Soviet atrocities against Poles had not been appreciated, which made him realise that “nothing profits as much as writing anti-Polish books from a Jewish perspective”. Thus, he changed the field of his research interest, which helped him earn money and resulted in a professorship in Princeton. The idea of Gross writing books for profit was quite often discussed by others. Therefore, it would be more interesting to have a look at other motivations attributed to Gross by Zychowicz’s article.

A more complicated one, headlined in the article, digs deeper into the meanders of Gross’s biography and announces him as a journalist, who “pays a debt incurred 40 years ago from Adam Michnik” with his books on Polish-Jewish relations. What type of debt? Zychowicz begins his article with a de-

810 Krystian Brodacki wrote in “Niedziela” magazine: “In 2005, Prof. Chodakiewicz was appointed to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council by President George W. Bush (...). This seems to be sufficient recognition of the knowledge and honesty of our compatriot from Washington”. K. Brodacki, *Czytajcie Chodakiewicza!*, “Niedziela” 17 II 2008, p. 29.

811 All the above quotations come from this article. See P. Zychowicz, *Oko w oko z tuszczą*, “Rzeczpospolita” 26 I 2008, p. 18.

scription of a clash between Gross and Michnik at a birthday party of the latter (chief editor of “Gazeta Wyborcza”) in 1967. Zychowicz suggests that the argument cast a shadow on their acquaintance and was not resolved before Gross’s migration to the USA after March 1968. According to an anonymous “former oppositionist” quoted by Zychowicz, the two finally agreed “when Gross began to write about Polish-Jewish relations”. Jadwiga Staniszkis (a sociology professor and a famous political commentator) notices that his books on this subject, “result largely from a guilty conscience about Michnik”, whom Gross left behind, together with others “in the horrifying, grey, communist Poland” while he himself could get an education and develop in the USA. Staniszkis also explains how this debt was paid by the books on Polish-Jewish relations. She claims that Gross, informed of what was happening in Poland after 1989 by “Gazeta Wyborcza”, “received a deformed, exaggerated image of Polish reality”, where “the powers of progress, represented by his friends, struggled with the traditional Polish demons of anti-Semitism and nationalism. He believed that any criticism towards Michnik in Poland was caused by his Jewish origin. And since Gross felt guilty about leaving Michnik in 1968, he decided to join the war against ‘dark instincts sleeping in the Polish nation’, writing ‘Neighbors’ and ‘Fear’”.⁸¹²

In other words, the guilty conscience and remorse Gross felt for Adam Michnik as well as his incorrect perception of Polish reality inspired his work on “Neighbors”. Thus, a book written in the name of atonement led to one of the most important and certainly the one of the longest public debates in Poland after 1989. However, there is one more part of Gross’s biography, without which the author’s interest in Polish-Jewish relations and the reason for the emotional nature of his narration would be unclear: it is his personal experience of anti-Semitism in March 1968. According to Piotr Zychowicz, the anti-Semitic campaign launched by the communists, and particularly the confrontation between Gross, who was under arrest, and Security Service officers who liked using anti-Semitic rhetoric, “must have been a great shock for a 21 year-old student from a good family”. Therefore, he openly asks whether this experience “happens to echo in his books” – a suspicion which Józef Dajczgewand confirms.⁸¹³

812 According to Jadwiga Staniszkis, Gross’s biographical experiences or precisely his family experiences could explain some contents of his books: “Janek’s mom saved his dad’s life [Gross’s father was of Jewish origin –A/N]. That is why he has built up such high expectations for Poles. ”If it was possible in my family, it means it could have been possible in millions of others. For some reason it did not happen”. Ibidem.

813 Józef Dajczgewand: “Those people [Security Service officers – A/N] were skilled professionals. They broke this young boy in a brutal way. The whole prison experience must have been a great trauma for him. And his books must be an answer to what hap-

There were also others who believed that March 1968 determined the contents of “Fear” – for example, Ryszard Bugaj and Reverend Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, who interpreted Gross’s book as an “author’s individual revenge for having been expelled from Poland in 1968”.⁸¹⁴ It is not hard to guess that what inspired such an interpretation was the forthcoming 40th anniversary of the events of March 1968, in which Gross had been an active participant and a victim. However, what is much more important is that accepting such an interpretation is a classic example of SEP [Someone Else’s Problem phenomenon, i.e. a practice of ignoring an issue that we regard as another person’s problem and not ours]. In this case, the problem was Jan Tomasz Gross, his post-March trauma and his feelings of guilt about Adam Michnik, which he tried to overcome by writing his books, vibrating with emotions, about the difficult Polish-Jewish past.

Moreover, the fact that in these books Gross censures Poles in harsh and bitter words for their attitude towards Jews during and after the Holocaust is a understandable result of the identification with Jewish victims that Gross developed after his trauma in March. Indeed, one could not imagine a better (and a more patronising) way to undermine “Fear” than to acknowledge that it is the author and not us who has a personal problem, although we understand his experience and the resulting pain.

The devaluation of “Fear” also included the suggestion that its contents resulted from hatred or other negative feelings of the author towards Poles and Poland.⁸¹⁵ However, it focussed mostly on depreciating and criticising the very text and pointing at what was missing but should have definitely been included. Moreover, the most persistent critics of the book repeated almost all the accusations and invectives that had been once said about “Neighbors” – though not with the same intensity.

pened then in the jail building. It can be noticed in his writing style. His language is the language of emotions. Gross is a party of the argument, somehow a participant of the events he describes. March 1968 was like a continuation of the War for him, in a way. In such a situation there’s no room for neutrality”. Ibidem.

814 T. Isakowicz-Zaleski, *Falszerze historii*, “Gazeta Polska” 16 I 2008, p. 32; See also R. Bugaj, *Gross sadza Polskę na lawce hańby*, “Rzeczpospolita” 22 I 2008, p.16; A. Stempin, *Czy należy bać się “Strachu”?*, “Znak” 2008, issue 6, p. 128-129.

815 “Fear” as proving “far-reaching disdain and hatred” of the author was described by Paweł Lisiecki, the chief editor of “Rzeczpospolita”. He suggested that the way of depicting Poles in “Fear” was similar to the Nazi propaganda that had classified them as “Untermensch”. P. Lisiecki, *Żydzi, Polacy i przeszłość*, “Rzeczpospolita” 11 I 2008, p. 2; Gross’s hatred towards Poland and the Poles as a motivation to write “Fear” was also a theory promoted by “Nasz Dziennik” and “Myśl Polska” newspapers.

Thus, the new book by Gross was refused the status of an academic publication; it was demonstrated to include methodological and factual mistakes and selective and incomplete source texts. The academic value of the book was thought to be weakened by generalisations and a language that was too emotional and uncovered the non-academic commitment of the author. Another depreciating factor was the fact that Gross had not written anything new or unknown. He created a book which, to quote Piotr Siemko, was an emanation of America’s obligatory way of writing about the Holocaust, which meant making it the central event of the Second World War and changing “formerly obvious proportions of guilt”⁸¹⁶.

Similar to certain historians, other disputers also listed contexts ignored by Gross but which supposedly refuted his arguments. The “silenced circumstances”, believed to be the most important context, was not acknowledging the risk related to helping Jews during the war and the immensity of suffering experienced by Poles and caused by the occupiers. Another popular critique directed at Gross concerned his focus on the suffering of Jews while ignoring Polish martyrdom – which was thought to prove his partiality. Also, by ignoring Polish citizens recognised as Righteous among the Nations, “Fear” was considered as unjust and erroneous. Although Gross tried to explain that it had been the drama of the Righteous who were forced to remain anonymous after the war that inspired him to write “Fear”, his arguments were for nothing. Besides, as Gross noticed, referring to the book of Władysław Bartoszewski or Zofia Lewinówna⁸¹⁷, that no one accused the authors of ignoring the case of *szmalcownicy* or blackmailers in their book about Jews rescued by Poles.⁸¹⁸

Gross was also criticised for not including in the Polish edition of the book the first chapter of the American edition, “Poland abandoned”, depicting the situation in Poland during and after the war. Some claimed that the Polish edition of “Fear” was a censored version of the American, which was overflowing with much more radical statements, judgements and conclusions, thus being even more anti-Polish than the already anti-Polish, domestic, “light” version. “Anti-Polish” and “anti-Catholic” were terms used not only by the far-right and conservative “Nasz Dziennik”, “Gazeta Polskiej” or “Myśl Polska”, but also by moderately conservative “Tygodnik Solidarność” and “Rzeczpospolita”. It was anti-Polish because it did not speak of Polish victims, but of perpetrators and an

816 P. Semka, *Strach cofnął dialog o całą epokę*, “Rzeczpospolita” 16 I 2008, p. 14.

817 Bartoszewski and Lewinówna were editors of a study, first published in 1966, devoted to the help given to Jews by Poles during the Second World War. See W. Bartoszewski, Z. Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom 1939-1945*, Warszawa 2007.

818 See J. T. Gross, *Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce tuż po wojnie*, Kraków 2008, p. 11.

indifferent majority; anti-Catholic because it formulated serious accusations against Polish Church officials including its icons: cardinals Adam Sapieha and Stefan Wyszyński. “An anti-Polish lampoon” was a term used by the leader of the “Law and Justice” party, Jarosław Kaczyński.⁸¹⁹ Expressions such as “pasquill” or “lampoon” helped many other disputers to label and characterise the book. These deprecating terms alone did not allow a serious debate over what they referred to. Similarly, it would be difficult to have such a discussion on a “propaganda indictment instead of history”⁸²⁰ or a “weak, little ideological composition” similar to “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”⁸²¹ – because “Fear” was defined this way as well.

Therefore, in the name of a serious conversation about the issues raised by Gross in “Fear”, the right-wing “Niedziela”, “Nasz Dziennik”, “Rzeczpospolita”, “Czas!”, “Gazeta Polska”, “Tygodnik Solidarność”, “Myśl Polska” and other magazines recommended Marek Chodkiewicz’s book “After Holocaust”. It was presented as an honestly documented, balanced and objective scientific work by a recognised historian – “an antidote to Gross’s ‘work’”.⁸²² Parts of the book and, most importantly, interviews with its author were published. Everything was done in order to devalue the contents of “Fear” and cover it with a book stamped by the Institute of National Remembrance. For the same purpose, some newspapers published texts that could be roughly described as “histories from the other side” or “contra-histories”. While on one page there was a text referring to “Fear” and strongly critical of it, on the next one there was an article or a testimony aimed at undermining Gross’s arguments. “Histories from the other side” described Poles who paid the highest price for saving Jews.⁸²³ There have been many such publications: about an exhibition in Cracow documenting Polish help for Jews in Little Poland between 1939 and 1945;⁸²⁴ about Jews

819 *Quote after Napisali o “Strachu”*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 9-10 II 2008, p. 27.

820 T. P. Terlikowski, “Strach”, czyli propagandowy akt oskarżenia zamiast historii, “Rzeczpospolita” 11 I 2008, p. 12.

821 T. Isakowicz-Zaleski, *Falszerze historii*, “Gazeta Polska” 16 I 2008, p. 32.

822 K. Brodacki, *Czytajcie Chodakiewicza!*, “Niedziela” 17 II 2008, p. 29.

823 See A. M. Sekretarska, *Życie za życie*, “Gazeta Polska” 16 I 2008, p. 19; J. Żaryn (introduction), *Schronienie na plebanii*, “Rzeczpospolita” 19-20 I 2008, p. 29.

824 Janusz Kurtyka, the president of the Institute of National Remembrance, who was present at the opening of the exhibition, said: “(...) The problem of *szmalcownictwo* is always mentioned when there is a discussion about the attitudes of Poles during the war. But in fact the main attitude of a Pole is being helpful”. See A. Wojnar, *Pamięć nie tylko na zdjęciach*, “Niedziela” 10 II 2008, p. 9.

murdering Poles, Jews informing on their Polish rescuers,⁸²⁵ or Jews responsible for the death of their kinsmen.⁸²⁶

Publishing these stories side by side cannot have been coincidental. Analogous strategies were already employed in 1968, on the wave of the anti-Semitic campaign, when the press published articles about foreign media accusing Poles of complicity in the Holocaust and of anti-Semitism together with contra-histories of similar content and function.

However, taking into consideration the pogroms discussed in “Fear” and caused by the rumours of ritual murders committed by Jews, it is worth noticing curious aspects of the “contra-histories” used in the polemics with Gross. Three different newspapers simultaneously mentioned the story of the killing of Bogdan Piasecki, son of the president of PAX (a secular Catholic organisation created in 1947 by the pre-war, extreme-right Polish activists; author); the killing was supposed to have features of Jewish ritual murder.⁸²⁷ The authors of these publications did not claim it with full conviction but allowed such an interpretation and introduced certain presumptions into the public discourse. Thus, they could insinuate that perhaps in Kielce, Cracow or Rzeszow...? Certainly, they revived the myth whose destructive results Gross had discussed in “Fear”. Apparently, for some people in Poland, Jewish ritual murders are not only a myth, as shown by research conducted by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir and others⁸²⁸ near Sandomierz. However mind-boggling these results are, they become more and more understandable considering the effects of the three publications mentioned.

Quite a peculiar method of devaluing “Fear” was to classify Gross’s book as that of a Jewish voice, that is, speaking of it as a Polish-Jewish and not a Polish-Polish dispute, which, in fact, it was. The essence of this reasoning can be seen in Piotr Semko’s text, in which he writes: “Gross wanted to scream the truth about the tragedy of his nation”, and adds, referring to the very discussion about “Fear”, that the Jewish side “has a right” to observe the intentions of its critics.⁸²⁹ The presumption that Gross speaks in the name of Jews and is a party in the Polish-Jewish dispute understates the contents of his book, making it seem biased. However, it is suggested that a Jewish book has every right to be biased

825 See I. Lisiak, *Roman Blum oddał życie*, “Myśl Polska” 13 IV 2008, p. 18.

826 See A. Solak, *Zagłada “Patrii”*, “Myśl Polska” 9 III 2008, p. 16-17.

827 See M. Motas, *Winni księża i katoendecy*, “Myśl Polska” 10 II 2008, p. 5; K. M. Mazur, *Filozofia bungee*, “Czas!” 2 II 2008, p. XII; J. R. Nowak, *Przegląd prasy*, “Niedziela” 13 I 2008, p. 30.

828 J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi. Antropologia przesądu*, Warszawa 2008; See also J. Żyduł, *Kłamstwo krwi. Legenda mordu rytualnego na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 2012.

829 P. Semka, *Strach cofnął dialog o całą epokę*, “Rzeczpospolita” 16 I 2008, p. 14.

– after all, it represents a foreign, antagonistic perspective and is a voice in the permanent dispute. Accepting such an interpretation, the accusations can be dismissed together with the challenges that “Fear” poses to Poles. Only, Semko’s theory of the Polish-Jewish dispute and its influence on “Fear” is not grounded in any evidence. As Seweryn Blumsztajn rightly noted, “Jan Gross does not ask: ‘Why did you do it to us?’, he asks: ‘Why could we do such a thing?’. Clearly, it does not mean he is right. But ‘Fear’ is a Polish book and the dispute over it is our, Polish, conversation”.⁸³⁰ Similarly, anti-Semitism was another Polish problem Cardinal Dziwisz and others attempted to invalidate during the “Fear” debate. Many journalists suggested that it was artificially created and kept alive by the “Gazeta Wyborcza” clique who often used it instrumentally. Rafał Ziemkiewicz noted that in fact the debate over “Fear” interested only “Gazeta Wyborcza”, for everyone else evaluated the book in the same way as Cardinal Dziwisz and found the discussion finished.⁸³¹ Ziemkiewicz was accompanied by Robert Krasowski from “Dziennik”, who claimed in his broad article that anti-Semitism in Poland is neither social, nor real, but an instrumentalised, political problem; besides, “Gross’s book is not worth organising a debate over” as it “does not bring any new arguments”.⁸³² Some of the arguers who depreciated “Fear” expressed with Pharisaic care their concern that the book might not only evoke antipathy towards Jews but also contribute to a regress in Polish-Jewish dialogue.⁸³³

Naturally, defining every form of criticism as an attempt to invalidate and depreciate “Fear” would be an abuse and misinterpretation. Moreover, it could be unjust for those debaters who, drawing attention to the weak points of “Fear”, such as language, generalisations and exaggerations, did not use these arguments to cover the key contents nor follow it up with questions and messages. On the contrary, they did not cast doubt on the documented events but stressed the importance of confronting this chapter of Polish history. Above all, what they were saying had nothing to do with cutting off the debate over Gross’s book or dismissing the accusations formulated by the author.

830 S. Blumsztajn, *Polski głos Grossa*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 19-20 I 2008, p. 16.

831 R. A. Ziemkiewicz, *Jesteśmy skazani na bezsilność*, “Rzeczpospolita” 20 II 2008, p. 15.

832 R. Krasowski, *Antysemityzm Polaków jako problem polityczny*, “Dziennik Polska” 18 I 2008, p. 6.

833 See eg. P. Semka, *Strach cofnął dialog o całą epokę*, “Rzeczpospolita” 16 I 2008, p. 14; G. Pustkowiak, *Antysemityzm Jana T. Grossa*, “Myśl Polska” 3 II 2008, p. 19; M. Łętowski, *Gross igra z ogniem*, “Tygodnik Solidarność” 25 I 2008, p. 33; P. Zychowicz, *Czy “Strach” zaszkodzi dialogowi?*, “Rzeczpospolita” 5 I 2008, p. 7; P. Lisicki, *Żydzi, Polacy i przeszłość*, “Rzeczpospolita” 11 I 2008, p. 2.

3. “Fear” without fear

Weak points of Gross’s book were mentioned also by those disputers whose voices were relatively inaudible and who may be defined as followers of the Jan Błóński⁸³⁴ tradition of speaking about the difficult Polish-Jewish past. This “moral discourse”, so clearly outlined and loudly spoken in the discussion over Jedwabne was, in the case of “Fear”, was drowned out by those who, for different reasons, found the book bad and not worth talking about. Also, the debate over “Fear” lacked articles of the scale of those from the times of the “Jedwabne” dispute: “Obsesja niewinności” [The Innocence Obsession] by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, “My z Jedwabnego” [We From Jedwabne] by Anna Bikont, “Jedwabne to nowe imię Holokaustu” [Jedwabne Is a New Name for Holocaust] by Reverend Stanisław Musiał, or “Krótkowzroczność kulturalnych” [Short-Sightedness of the Cultured] by Hanna Świda-Ziemia, to mention just a few important and courageous voices. This does not mean that Gross’s book was noticed only by its zealous adversaries or that the tradition of having a critical look at the past was not followed. Yet, the representatives of this tradition had a difficult task to carry out. They had to struggle with a multi-voiced, dominant, social representation of “Fear” reconstructed above, that is, finding Gross’s book anti-Polish, anti-Catholic, filled with simplifications, missing contexts, far-fetched interpretations, generalisations and exaggerations – thus not worth consideration. That is why a lot of statements took the shape of polemics in response to such representations of the book. They aimed at demonstrating the value of the contents of “Fear” through strategies opposite to those of SEP, namely “legitimising, disclosing, publicising and making important what others found unimportant as a subject of interest”⁸³⁵. Therefore, the journalist Marek Beylin stressed that the drawbacks of “Fear”, although they exist, are “secondary in comparison to the challenge that Gross mounts to our dealing with the past”,⁸³⁶ and the Polish writer Jerzy Pilch asked outright whether they can invalidate in any way Gross’s question of how it was possible that Jews were murdered in Poland after the war.⁸³⁷

Other statements had a similar character, while some disputers, for example Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, did not notice these diligently listed errors and weak points of “Fear” at all. The weak points actually listed by Tokarska-Bakir did not overlap with the accusations raised by the journalists from “Rzeczpospolita”

834 Polish historian literary critic, journalist and translator

835 M. Czyżewski, K. Dunin, A. Piotrowski, *Cudze problemy. O ważności tego, co nieważne. Analiza dyskursu publicznego w Polsce*, Warszawa 1991, p. 7.

836 M. Beylin, *Żydzi, Polacy, Strach*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 12-13 I 2008, p. 2.

837 J. Pilch, *Czarna robota*, “Dziennik Polska” (dodatek Europa) 18 I 2008.

or “Nasz Dziennik”,⁸³⁸ the most popular of which was the missing context of the events described by Gross. This argument was debated by Marek Edelman, who categorically stated: “I can see no context of a murder. A murderer is a scoundrel and that is it. And the one who sees and turns their head away is his or her accessory”,⁸³⁹ Sławomir Buryła, a Holocaust literature researcher, stressed that “Fear” was in fact the first monograph treating of the postwar violence against Jews even though individual symptoms had been already known by Polish historians and described separately.⁸⁴⁰ Indeed, no one before Gross had attempted a complete exposition of the subject, which in most part undermines the suggestion that “Fear” is imitative or reproductive.

As with some historians, journalists defended the sharp and provocative language of “Fear”, praising it for initiating discussion on an important subject. They mentioned measured works by Polish historians also concerning the difficult Polish-Jewish past, which also spoke about the disgraceful attitudes of Poles towards Jews, and which could have brought completely new knowledge but instead had no repercussions whatsoever. Their list was repeated as a mantra: “Prowincja Noc”,⁸⁴¹ “Szanowny Panie Gestapo”,⁸⁴² “Ja tego Żyda znam”⁸⁴³ and “U genezy Jedwabnego”.⁸⁴⁴ Another example was an anniversary article by Adam Michnik published in “Gazeta Wyborcza”, in which the author analysed the

838 “I wonder,” Tokarska-Bakir writes, “whether I can put forward a factual objection towards his book. And only one comes to my mind. This book, as well as the reality itself, is close to sadism. Some of the evidence just cannot be held. One might want to but something inside refuses to allow it. Some elementary trust to the world is needed to live and the confrontation with concentrated cruelty deprives us from this trust. Amery [Jean Amery, a French essayist writing about moral challenges caused by Holocaust – A.N.] claimed that the pain, once experienced, cannot be communicated in any other way without causing it. This is exactly the danger of the historical literature written by Gross. To express certain things, one has to overcome ones and someone else’s pain withdrawal reflex”. And another word about Gross’s “fault”, short and ironic this time: “Gross’s fault lies in boycotting standards of honesty accepted in Polish historical literature”. J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Strach w Polsce*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 12-13 I 2008, p. 22.

839 J. Szcześna, *Powszechna rzecz zabijanie*, an interview with M. Edelman, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 19-20 I 2008, p. 14.

840 S. Buryła, *Wiedza, która sprawia ból*, Znak” 2008, issue 3, p. 183-184

841 See B. Engelking, J. Leociak, D. Libionka (ed.), *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim*, Warszawa 2007.

842 See B. Engelking, “Szanowny panie gestapo”. *Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie i okolicach 1940-1941*, Warszawa 2003.

843 See J. Grabowski, “Ja tego Żyda znam”. *Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie 1939-1943*, Warszawa 2004.

844 See A. Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego. Żydzi na kresach północno-wschodniej II Rzeczypospolitej, wrzesień 1939-lipiec 1941*, Warszawa 2006.

responses of the Polish bishops Czesław Kaczmarek and Teodor Kubina to the Kielce pogrom – the same documents that Gross used when writing “Fear”. Michnik’s article, however, did not start any debate and none of the Catholic Church officials rose to speak about it.⁸⁴⁵

Asking about the silence and the undeserved lack of public debate greeting those publications, one could hear that the articles were too balanced or reserved. A more complex answer was given by Teresa Bogucka, Polish writer and journalist, who noticed that since the Polish debate over Jedwabne, the name of the author of “Fear” had already been labelled controversial, therefore some scandal regarding his upcoming book was expected (and tabloids did their best to provide it). Bogucka also noted that the case of Polish historians writing about the dark side of Polish history is considerably different to that of an American professor writing about the same events and in this way insulting our nation in front of the world.⁸⁴⁶ Books by foreign scholars, even if entirely consistent with the findings of Polish researchers, are treated on different terms.

The anti-SEP strategies mainly involved recognising and addressing the problem of the attitudes of Poles toward the Holocaust and the postwar violence against its survivors as well as acknowledging that the anti-Semitism in Poland described by Gross was a real phenomenon, not one artificially evoked. Mirosław Czech in his article started a polemic with Robert Krasowski, suggesting that Krasowski had unintentionally demonstrated that “the problem [Polish anti-Semitism] he describes as non-existent is in fact real.”⁸⁴⁷ Without doubt, an important voice in the debate was an article by Stanisław Obirek with the meaningful title “The Church needs Gross”, in which the author criticised the attitude of Polish Catholic Church officials towards the contents of “Fear”. He bravely stated that what the bishops say demonstrates that they don’t feel “the need to

845 The above-mentioned article by Adam Michnik about the Polish bishops’ response to the Kielce pogrom was published in two parts by *Gazeta Wyborcza* on the 60th anniversary of the pogrom. See A. Michnik, *Pogrom kielecki: dwa rachunki sumienia*, “*Gazeta Wyborcza*” 3 VI 2006, p. 12 and 10 VI 2006, p. 22; The article was mentioned by Michnik himself during a public discussion with Gross in Cracow: “I once wrote an essay about the Kielce pogrom, in which I balanced all the arguments and everything was justly described, but not a living soul noticed it. To be noticed, you have to write like Janek Gross did but this isn’t information only about him but also about us – his readers”. See D. Wielowieyska, *Lekceważyłam nasz antysemityzm*, “*Gazeta Wyborcza*” 10 IV 2008, p. 20; *Z antysemityzmu trzeba się spowiadać. Zapis fragmentów spotkania z Janem Tomaszem Grosssem, które odbyło się w Krakowie 24 stycznia 2008 roku*, [in:] *Wokół “Strachu”. Dyskusja o książce Jana T. Grossa*, M. Gądek (ed.) Kraków 2008, p. 345.

846 T. Bogucka, *Strach, gniew, debata*, “*Gazeta Wyborcza*” 23-24 II 2008, s. 26.

847 M. Czech, *Lewica nie wymyśliła antysemityzmu*, “*Gazeta Wyborcza*” 22 I 2008, p. 23.

ask oneself questions about the history of the Holocaust” and that “for them, the lesson from the Holocaust is yet to be learnt.”⁸⁴⁸

In addition, some contributions strengthened the claims made in “Fear” by giving examples from history, literature, film or from personal experience. For instance, Halina Bortnowska wrote a very moving article about her own reception of “Fear” and the shock she felt. Her considerations may be interpreted as subtle criticism towards those who belittled the contents of Gross’s book; this criticism is very clear when she writes: “‘Fear’ seems to induce anxiety by imposing a feeling of guilt on its readers. The author is accused of such an intention, I believe unjustly. It is us who, in trying to free ourselves from the trap of co-feeling the harm, try to deny the facts. As a result, we stand on the side of the wrongdoers and their defenders.”⁸⁴⁹ Others shone light on the motives and intentions behind the attempts to invalidate “Fear”, unanimously interpreting them as a desire to hide and deny the uncomfortable truth.⁸⁵⁰

The truth is not new; it had been discussed by scholars and known by “insiders” but it was only Gross’s book that started to inscribe this truth in social memory on such a scale. Although some gave Gross all the credit for it, they should give some, paradoxically, to the noisy critics without whom “Fear” would have shared the fate of the many Polish historical works that were ignored. While readers of the Polish press had a chance to learn about the Kielce pogrom on the occasion of some anniversaries, they probably heard of the Cracow pogrom for the first time. After all, not everyone knows the work by Anna Cichopek.⁸⁵¹ Michał Bilewicz was right when he wrote that Gross’s book may be used as a “tool to popularise historical knowledge on almost a massive scale.”

It would be difficult to determine its symbolic ending (unless one chose the hasty “Znak” publication consisting of the articles written by debaters). The debate simply waned as a result of a lack of internal dynamics and left the impression that it was being forcibly/artificially kept alive since participants hardly ever referred to each other’s arguments. Instead, they tried to determine whether or not “Fear” was worth discussing. Unfortunately, the answer “no” dominated. Those

848 S. Obirek, *Kościół potrzebuje Grossa*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 7 II 2008, p. 24.

849 H. Bortnowska, *Patrząc na ekshumację*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 6 II 2008, p. 22.

850 See np. A. Szostkiewicz, *Egzorcysta Gross. Rozdrapywaczy ran nie lubi się nie tylko u nas*, “Polityka” 2008, issue 5, p. 30; W. Maziarski, *Lekcja “Strachu”*, an interview with P. Śpiewak, “Newsweek” 2008, issue 4, p. 22; B. Łagowski, *Strach przed prawdą*, “Przegląd” 3 II 2008, p. 13; S. Buryła, *Wiedza, która sprawia ból*, “Znak” 2008, issue 3, p. 178-185.

851 See A. Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945 r.*, Warszawa 2000.

who gave this answer paid relatively more attention to Jan Tomasz Gross than to the contents of his book and the challenges it posed. However, the debate, together with all its imperfections, uncovered and highlighted certain things.

First of all, it revealed the results of historical politics initiated in Poland under the rule of the Law and Justice Party, who rejected “critical patriotism” and supported a patriotism that affirmed the past of the nation.⁸⁵² Without doubt, the debate over “Fear” showed that the efforts of the Law and Justice party to stop the process of revising the myth of a past of heroes and martyrs and to start to look for reasons to be proud of one’s homeland were fruitful. One could clearly observe this shift, for example in the words of historians related to the Institute of National Remembrance, and particularly in the publications under the auspices of Marek Chodakiewicz. One may venture to say that it was fortunate that Janusz Kurtyka was not the President when Gross’s book “Neighbors” was published in Poland.

Secondly, the debate over “Fear” revealed the shifts or transformations in Polish public discourse, somehow related to the influence of the rules of affirmative patriotism. The best example of these reconfigurations is what appeared in the columns of “Rzeczpospolita”. While the newspaper had played an important and praiseworthy role during the debate over the Jedwabne pogrom, they no longer did after the release of “Fear”. Besides, it was during the debate about “Fear” when a numerous and audible group of historians sharing the views of “Catholic National Democrats” (the term introduced by Gross and referring to a certain worldview) and the journalists who supported them were revealed. Some of them did not even refrain from a more or less veiled anti-Semitic rhetoric. This problem leads us to the third issue related to the debate over “Fear”. Despite the attempts to invalidate the problem of anti-Semitism, it manifested itself over the course of the debate. Most importantly, the debate revealed the consent given to anti-Semitism in the Polish Catholic Church. The key evidence were the lectures given in churches and parish centres by Jerzy Robert Nowak, which (with few exceptions) did not bring a strong response from Church officials but rather some sort of silent acceptance.

The most important conclusion drawn from the analysis of the debate over “Fear”, however, is the backlash that could be observed after the Jedwabne controversy. This counterattack led to affirmative patriotism, reflected in the construction of the Warsaw Rising Museum and the exploitation of the topics of the

852 About “critical” and “affirmative” patriotism, See D. Gawin, *O pożytkach i szkodliwości historycznego rewizjonizmu*, [in:] *Pamięć i odpowiedzialność*, R. Kostro, T. Merta (ed.), Kraków 2005.; See also A. Wolff-Powęska, *Polskie spory o historię i pamięć. Polityka historyczna*, “Przełęcz Zachodni” 2007, issue 1, p. 3-45.

Polish Righteous Among the Nations and Jewish communists. This backlash took the form of a blockade of public accounting for the difficult and incriminating Polish-Jewish past and was expressed with a meaningful silence, which, after “Neighbors”, was temporarily broken and interrupted by “Fear”. This very context should be taken into account when one interprets the different strategies of invalidating “Fear”. The essence of such a strategy and, at the same time, an absolute lack of understanding of the heart of the matter, is expressed in the appeal made by the editor-in-chief of “Czas!”: “Let us forget about the Jews and finally focus on Poland”.⁸⁵³ Since the Jedwabne controversy, his statement has been a credo of many Poles whose response to the massacre revealed by Gross in “Neighbors” was not a feeling of guilt, but a long-term objection to self-flagellation.

853 T. Sommer, *Zapomnieć o Żydach*, “Czas!” 19 I 2008, p. III.