The publication of three books by Jan Tomasz Gross about war and post-war Polish-Jewish relations (Sąsiedzi (Neighbors),2 Strach (Fear),3 and Złote żniwa (Golden Harvest)4) in the 2000s provoked vivid public debates. These debates, and particularly the initial one, the ‘Jedwabne debate’ from 2000-2001, were analyzed from multiple angles, discussing their influence over national identity, consciousness, approach to national history, etc. In this paper I will focus on the contestation over the concept of patriotism that also occurred within these debates. In mid-2000s the conservative intellectuals criticized the development of an allegedly overly critical approach to history, by calling it ‘critical patriotism,’ and they tried to denigrate it within their ‘affirmative’ approach.

Given that the main concern of this project is with intellectual, hence opinion-setting, discourse on key political concepts, here patriotism, the tabloid and extremist publications, however important in terms of circulation are not included in the analysis. The aim is to gather a comprehensive array of sources identifying key voices and topics in the intellectual field. An approximate placement on the political spectrum of daily and weekly publications used in the analysis, based on their general editorial line, can be proposed as follows: right-wing: Gość Niedzielny, Rzeczpospolita, Wprost5; center-lining: Tygodnik Powszechny, Newsweek; center-left and left: Gazeta Wyborcza, Polityka, Przekrój, and Przegląd.

I will demonstrate the transformation of the nature of the contestation over patriotism in the debates about Gross’s books, which from open and deliberative in the beginning of the 2000s became increasingly polarized in the second half of the decade. I will show that while critical introspection into historical memory is incompatible with the conservative mindset, it has liberal and left-wing proponents who consider it ‘mature,’ and consequently re-label ‘critical’ patriotism as ‘mature’ patriotism.

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1 Work in progress, do not cite. Comments and questions are welcome by e-mail.
2 Jan Tomasz Gross, Sąsiedzi (Neighbors) (Sejny: Pogranicze, 2000).
4 Jan Tomasz Gross, Złote żniwa (Golden Harvest) (Kraków: Znak, 2011).
5 After the change of ownership of Wprost, and of its editor-in-chief, the weekly evolved towards a more centrist editorial line post-2010.
The subject of the ‘Jedwabne debate’ in 2000/2001, following the publication of Neighbors, provoked a number of commentators to liken it to the German Historikerstreit.\(^6\) Within my focus on the concept of patriotism I will thus inquire whether ‘critical (or mature) patriotism’ that emerged in the context of Jedwabne debate could be perceived as a Polish version of ‘constitutional patriotism,’ which reached beyond traditional and historical objects of allegiance.

However, given that the debate and contestation over the concept of patriotism within the aforementioned debates remains strongly rooted in history (opposing an ‘affirmative’ to a ‘critical’ approach), the conclusions concerning the possibility of linking ‘critical’ to ‘constitutional’ patriotism can only be mitigated. Instead, I will suggest that ‘critical patriotism’ could be rather understood as an attempt at promoting a form of (normative) ethical patriotism.

1. **Uncovering the dark past within debates about Polish-Jewish relations**

The post-war communist historiography forged a canonical image of the Second World War and of Polish participation in it: Poles were depicted as brave heroes and victims, who never collaborated with the Nazis (with the classical argument that there was ‘no Polish Quisling’). The self-critical attempts of certain intellectuals at proposing a different, more critical vision of Polish-Jewish relations between 1945 and 1948 were rapidly silenced\(^7\) until into the 1980s. The historian of Polish-Jewish relations Joanna Michlic suggests that a “narrative of symmetry between fates of Poles and Jews, and the solidarity and unity of the great majority of Polish society with its Jewish minority during the Holocaust”\(^8\) became the key element of the official discourse regarding war relations between the two communities. This interpretation implied that both communities suffered in the same way and that Poles

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\(^6\) Literally: “Historians’ quarrel.” It was an intellectual and political debate led in West Germany in the late 1980s, concerning the crimes of Nazi Germany, which fleshed out the concept of ‘constitutional patriotism’ that was coined in the late 1970s by Dolf Sternberger.

\(^7\) It was namely the case of eminent writers and historians: Jerzy Andrzejewski, Witold Kula or Kazimierz Wyka. Joanna Michlic, “The Holocaust and its aftermath as perceived in Poland: voices of Polish intellectuals, 1945-1947,” in The return of Jews to Europe, ed. David Bankier (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003).

were only victims of the war, and not wrongdoers.⁹ For a long time, Polish-Jewish relations during the war were not object of thorough academic research, not even in émigré circles.¹⁰

The first instances of re-interpretation of the communist historiography about the war, and of the Polish-Jewish relations, occurred in the 1980s¹¹ in the still ‘regimented’ public discourse,¹² progressively liberalizing after the consolidation of the democratic opposition and the emergence of the Solidarity movement. These discussions took place among others on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising (1983)¹³; following the release of Claude Lanzmann’s movie “Shoah” (1985); and following the publication of Jan Błoński’s article “Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto (Poor Poles look at the ghetto),” in 1987 in the Catholic weekly Tygodnik Powszechny (TP), which had been written in reaction to international conferences on Polish-Jewish relations,¹⁴ and to “Shoah.” Post-1989 examples of uncovering the dark Polish-Jewish war past include, among others, influential articles published in Gazeta Wyborcza. Michał Cichy’s article “Polacy – Żydzi: czarne karty Powstania (Poles-Jews: black cards of the Uprising)”¹⁵ about instances of killing of Jews by the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK) during the Warsaw Uprising is the first example. It was published a few months ahead of the Uprising’s 50th anniversary in 1994. Secondly, Hanna Świda-Ziemb’s 1998 article “Hańba obojętności (The disgrace of

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⁹ Tony Judt discusses how difficult and disconcerting it was for Eastern Europeans to “come to terms with their past treatment of Jews” (Tony Judt, “The past is another country,” in The Politics of Retribution in Europe, op. cit., 312).


¹³ During the Second World War two uprisings against the German Army took place in Warsaw, in 1943 it was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and in 1944, the Warsaw Uprising. They were both drowned in blood.


¹⁵ January 29, 1994. Cichy later retracted from his accusatory stance. In the article “Przepraszam powstańców (I apologize to the insurgents),” published in Gazeta Wyborcza on 23 December 2006, he stated that in 1994 he behaved like a lustrator (prosecutor) who did not pay attention to people’s pain.
indifference),” further developed the arguments Błoński’s on the occasion of the discussion of the crosses of Auschwitz.\textsuperscript{16}

The key push for a nation-wide discussion of the dark past of war-time Polish-Jewish relations came only in May 2000, when Polish-American historian of Jewish origins Jan Tomasz Gross published his book \textit{Neighbors}. The book told a story of the pogrom of the Jewish inhabitants of Jedwabne,\textsuperscript{18} a small city in Eastern Poland, which happened on July 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1941, and in the aftermath of the Second World War was blamed on the Nazis. Gross brought to public attention the fact that it had been the Polish inhabitants of Jedwabne who massacred their Jewish neighbors.

A very vivid public debate followed the publication of this book. In the discussion, the fact of the pogrom itself was not really contested, but its interpretation and the extent of Polish involvement was. This debate was important not only for Polish-Jewish relations as such, but it also raised questions concerning collective responsibility, historical memory, collective identity and patriotism of the Polish people, then and now. The debates that followed the publication of Gross’s subsequent books, \textit{Fear} in 2008 and \textit{Golden Harvest} in 2011, provide helpful insights for assessing whether the debate about Jedwabne changed the self-perception of the Poles with respect to their behavior during the war, anti-Semitism, and the archetypal myth of Poles as heroes and victims (constructed in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, but reinforced later on, first during the Interwar period, and then by the communist propaganda).\textsuperscript{19}

Section 2 analyzes the debate about Jedwabne. It shows the emergence of ‘critical’ and ‘defensive’ stances in this debate and their respective characteristics, and showcases the broad and open nature of the discussion in 2000/2001. The analysis continues with the assessment of the debates concerning Gross’s two subsequent books published in 2008 and

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Gazeta Wyborcza}, August 17, 1998.
\textsuperscript{17} In 1979, Pope John-Paul II, during his first visit to Poland as a pope, celebrated a mass in the surroundings of the former Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau (close to the town Oświęcim), where one sixth of all the Jews killed in the Holocaust lost their lives. A commemorative ‘papal cross’ was planted on the scene. In the summer of 1998, rumors arose that the state administration wanted to remove this cross. It provoked a confrontation between the self-proclaimed ‘defenders of the cross,’ and the people who believed that it should be removed, as it only constituted a symbol of the Catholic religion and not of the Jewish one. See Geneviève Zubrzycki, \textit{The crosses of Auschwitz. Nationalism and religion in post-communist Poland} (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006).
\textsuperscript{18} Jedwabne was not an isolated fact, similar pogroms happened in Radziłów on 7 July 1941 and Wańkow on 5 July 1941. Anna Bikont, \textit{My z Jedwabnego} (We, from Jedwabne) (Warszawa: Prószyński Media 2004), 61.
\textsuperscript{19} Polonsky and Michlic, \textit{The neighbors respond}, 38.
2011, so as to assess the evolution of the public sphere and the impact of the Jedwabne debate (Section 3). This part illustrates the change of the intellectual and institutional climate and how the ‘defensive’ stance promoted by the conservatives overpowered the critical/liberal one. Finally, the discussion of different conceptions of patriotism raised in the three debates will provide an analysis of the concept of ‘critical patriotism’ and its relation to theories of constitutional and ethical patriotism (Section 4).

2. The nation-wide debate about the pogrom in Jedwabne as the beginning of uncovering the dark past (2000/2001)

The Jedwabne debate that followed the publication of Neighbors shook previously established perceptions and initiated introspection and a slow re-interpretation of the popular image of Polish-Jewish war relations. This genuine debate lasted for almost two years, peaking between November 2000 and May 2001. Many actors took part in the discussion, including academics, politicians, researchers from the Institute of National Memory (IPN), and journalists. Historian Maciej Janowski sees this debate not only as a political and cultural conflict, but also as a professional discussion of researchers.

Within the Jedwabne debate, a number of questions concerning the ‘collective massacre’ were discussed: the concrete facts (the number of victims and of perpetrators; who led and instigated the killing, Germans or Poles, and their social roles), Gross’s methodology and his use of sources of oral history, ethical issues of collective responsibility of the Poles for the crime and the consequences of this knowledge. While the

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20 There are different periodizations of this debate in the secondary literature, but an overall agreement can be reached with respect to the fact that its most intense phase started in November 2000. Forecki, Spór o Jedwabne, 25-28; Michlic, “The Polish debate about the Jedwabne massacre,” 11.
21 IPN, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu (Institute of National Memory – Commission of prosecution of crimes against Polish nation) was created by the Polish Parliament in 1998 and started its activities in 2000. It is a research institute tasked with prosecuting Nazi and communist crimes; and the conservation of the documents of the communist secret police, UB (Urząd bezpieczeństwa, Security Office).
22 Maciej Janowski “Jedwabne, July 10, 1941: Debating the History of a Single Day”, in The Convolutions of Historical Politics, ed. Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman (Budapest: CEU Press, 2012), 71. Forecki presents a more nuanced perception of this question, suggesting that while the participation of historians in this debate was noticeable and significant, it was not dominant. Nevertheless, he also calls this debate a Polish Historikerstreit. Forecki, Spór o Jedwabne, 28.
23 This expression underscores the collective aspect of both victims and perpetrators. Bikont, My z Jedwabnego, 14.
24 There are different accounts of the number of victims in the pogrom: between 300 and 1600.
25 Concerning this matter, it is instructive to refer to a meeting of Polish historians of 24 November 2000. At this meeting Marek Edelman, one of the sole survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1943, said that people were looking for a proof that Gross was a mediocre historian in order to be able to refute his theses without further investigation. Bikont, My z Jedwabnego, 19.
questions of genre, facts and methodology are important, for the purposes of the present analysis the discussion about the responsibility for the crime (among other moral issues raised) and the approach to national history will be the main focus, as they will be the most linked to the discussion about the concept of patriotism.

The ‘Jedwabne debate’ was described as a public and professional debate, leading to an unprecedented self-examination of the national consciousness. Renowned Polish historians qualified it as a national debate, one of the most profound debates on any historical issue after 1989, or even one of the most important public debates in Poland after 1989, “generat[ing] the most emotions both among participants and the general public”. Some Publizists went as far as suggesting that for starting this debate, Gross should receive some kind of (national) distinction. This debate was perceived as a step in the process of discarding ‘affirmative’ historiography, apologetic towards the past, for more critical and detailed studies or as a turning point that showed the maturity and the potential for a sincere historical introspection of the society.

Neighbors, in an unprecedented, open and strong manner, accused Poles of assisting the Nazis in the perpetration of the Holocaust, rather than of being simple bystanders (as the official canon would have it). The book also challenged the myth that the Polish people would by and large have helped the Jews during the war. These accusations led to a highly controversial reception of the book: the range of reactions included shock, disbelief, anger

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26 The alleged dualism of this book, partly historical and factual and partly moral, was a challenge for both the reviewers and Publizists.
27 For an analysis of these issues, see Janowski “Jedwabne,” Forecki, Spór o Jedwabne.
29 Shana Penn, “Prasa amerykańska na temat roli Polski w Holokaustie (The American press concerning the Polish role in the Holocaust), in Polacy i Żydzi, op. cit., 77.
31 Marcin Kula, unpublished manuscript “Refleksje na marginesie dyskusji o Jedwabnem (Reflections on the margin of the discussion on Jedwabne),” quoted in Polonsky and Michlic, The neighbours respond, 30.
36 Guy Billauer, “Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Ameryce (the Polish-Jewish relations in America),” in Polacy i Żydzi, op. cit., 104.
38 Even if the bystanders could also have their part of the blame for the crime.
and hysteria. The Jedwabne pogrom shook people’s consciousness, fostering an identity crisis by challenging the previously established historical image, and put the Holocaust in the center of the attention of the public opinion. It challenged the Polish “obsession of innocence,” characterizing Polish-Jewish relations, according to a powerful expression coined by cultural anthropologist, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, in her award winning essay under the same title, published in liberal Res Publica Nova. According to Michlic, Gross’s book reflected the position of liberal intellectuals who looked towards the future in a positive way and were not afraid to tackle difficult topics that did not show Poles in a positive light.

One of the main questions discussed was whether all Poles should accept the (moral and collective) responsibility for the crime committed in 1941 by the inhabitants of Jedwabne towards their Jewish neighbors. Critical and defensive positions, also called two Polish perspectives on the past, clashed sharply on this question. The (conservative) proponents of the defensive approach rejected responsibility for the crime, and focused on preserving national pride, while the proponents of the (liberal) critical approach pushed for accepting collective responsibility. Even if such a binary opposition was dominant in the public discourse, historian Andrzej Paczkowski, in the right-wing daily Rzeczpospolita, formulated a more nuanced four-category typology of positions with regard to their approach to Gross’s theses and to national history that will be useful for assessing different arguments used in this debate.

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39 Zgliszczyński, Antysemityzm po polsku, 75.
42 Michlic, “Czy antysemityzm w dzisiejszej Polsce ma jakieś znaczenie,” 183.
44 Elsewhere he described the dispute as the one between ‘moralists’ and ‘historiographers,’ the former rejecting the ‘innocence claims’ (e.g. Tokarska-Bakir), and promoting the collective responsibility thesis, and the latter pushing from more research on the topic, and setting the record straight (e.g. IPN, and Machcewicz). Yet these two categories could be described as two sides of the critical approach. Paczkowski, “Phantoms of the past.”
45 Paczkowski’s typology included four different receptions of Gross’s book: 1. positive towards Gross’s conclusions and self-critical towards history; 2. ‘defensive open,’ accepting some of Gross’s conclusions, but raising questions regarding Gross’s methods and the German instigation of the crime and moderately apologetic towards the past; 3. ‘defensive closed’ towards Gross’s theses, but radically apologetic towards national history, arguing for the smallest possible Polish participation in crime, supposedly orchestrated by the Nazis (the borderline between moderate and radical apologetic categories is difficult to draw clearly); finally, 4. ‘rejection tout court’ - also radically apologetic towards history, refusing all of Gross’s arguments about the Polish guilt or responsibility for the crime. Some of Gross’s opponents fully rejected his analysis (n°4 and to some extent n°3); others did not reject the facts, but tried to justify them by contextual elements (close to n°2). (Source 6.31)
A ‘communitarian’ argument was construed in favor of accepting collective responsibility, based on the combination of moral values with the question of community. It relied on the ‘pride for shame’ position, stating that if one wants to be proud of the past, one also has to accept responsibility for its dark moments and provide retribution. In this way, the proponents of the critical position pointed to the necessity of a new analysis of the canonical version of Polish collective memory of war, challenged by an emerging counter-memory. They praised Gross for initiating this process, challenging:

“the most important elements of Polish historical consciousness and its basic concepts, such as heroism, patriotism, feeling of being a victim and tolerance – by contrasting them with historical facts.”

In contrast, the proponents of the defensive position, including long-established conservative historian Tomasz Strzembosz, or younger historians with clear nationalist leaning, such as Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, Bogdan Musiał, or Piotr Gontarczyk, suggested that two truths/memories, Polish and Jewish, existed in parallel, and did not match. They put forward a number of strategies, in order to allow for the rejection of collective responsibility: denial (of the crime, integrally), justification (of the crime, by its war-time contextual circumstances, and its allegedly exceptional and non-representative nature) and shifting responsibility (from Poles to Germans, when it came to the perpetration or, at least, instigation of the crime). Generally, conservative historians and commentators rejected the argument of collective responsibility, defending the innocence thesis, and thereby the ‘good name’ of the nation. It is symptomatic that while the (conservative) right-wing often promotes a strong communitarian approach, and underscores the importance of belonging to the inter-generational national community, it rejects the obligation of collective

48 Interestingly, on the Polish side, it was the second generation (children of killers) who defended the most eagerly Polish memory of innocence. Bikont, My z Jedwabnego, 156.
49 One of the most widespread justification strategies of the pogrom was to refer to the Jewish cooperation with the Soviets between 1939 and 1941, during their occupation of North-East Poland during that time. According to this argument, Jews allegedly collaborated with the Soviets by denouncing Poles, who were later on deported to Siberia. The question would be whether such cooperation with the Soviets of some could justify the extermination of all? Bikont, My z Jedwabnego, particularly 104, 243, 320, 474 and 480. Gross rejected all contextual arguments, but Janowski points to a number of elements that should not be discarded so lightly, because they can contribute to a better understanding of the circumstances of the massacre, without necessarily excusing it: e.g. Dariusz Stola’s analysis of the specificities of Jedwabne’s region (it was the only region under the Soviet occupation with predominantly Polish ethnic population), making Jews easily memorized and singled out by Poles, “Jedwabne,” 65. This fact, coupled with lack of élites, decimated by the Soviets, and popular anti-Semitism facilitated the crime. Tornquist-Plewa, 153.
responsibility, also linked to the postulate of the intergenerational bond. Furthermore, as rightly pointed out by Janowski, many of Gross’s opponents criticized his emotional and moral approach to the topic, in the name of the necessary objectivity of the researcher;\(^{50}\) but at the same time, they also used “sharp value-ridden and emotionally charged statements,”\(^{51}\) thus contradicting themselves on the method.

This visible dichotomy of positions can be best described by a metaphor of the stain, used by economist Robert Cherry and social anthropologist Anna Orla-Bukowska. They suggested that the Jedwabne pogrom was a stain on the Polish reputation and there were two possible reactions to the knowledge about it: to try to bleach it, linked to the defensive and apologetic approach to history; or to rub it deeper inside,\(^{52}\) by critically re-evaluating the past, revealing the dark moments and using them as a lesson for present and future generations. Indeed, the debate split Polish society into two loose groups, or ‘two Polands’:\(^{53}\) those who accepted the moral challenge\(^ {54}\), for example by subscribing to the ‘pride for shame’ argument, and those who defensively rejected the discussion altogether, or even qualified it as another instance of a ‘Jewish attack,’ deploying anti-Semitic or straightforward nationalist arguments.

The Jedwabne debate promoted the development of the critical strand. It opened the way to dismantling old myths, notably that of the ‘innocent Poland.’ Throughout the debate, the opinions present in the press debate were polarized, notably on the question of an official apology, which would imply the recognition of the (collective) responsibility for the crime. Literary historian Andrzej Romanowski linked the willingness to apologize\(^ {55}\) to the

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\(^{50}\) Joanna Tokarska-Bakir critically discussed this statement as the remnant of a mission vested in historians in Poland, of preserving national identity. Historians would have to strive for preserving their ‘professional standards’, and discard any emotional involvement in their topic of research. For this reason, it led them also to under-privilege sources of ‘oral history,’ which require more personal and emotional involvement of the researcher. To her mind all these elements notably contribute to a higher valuation of historians over sociologists. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, “Poland as the sick man of Europe? Jedwabne, “post memory” and historians,” *Eurozine*, 30 May 2003. Such accusation was indeed voiced against Gross to discredit his argument, claiming that he was not a historian, but a (mere) sociologist, which will be discussed further.

\(^{51}\) Janowski, “Jedwabne,” 72-75.

\(^{52}\) “Czarna plama kala polską reputację, jedni wcierając ją głębiej, inni chcą ją wywabić” (A black stain tarnishes Polish reputation: some rub it deep inside, others want to bleach it).” Cherry and Orla-Bukowska, “Na przekór negatywnym stereotypom,” 34.

\(^{53}\) This powerful motive, in this case, constructs a binary opposition between a Poland that is ready to pick up the challenge and recognize the painful truth, and a Poland that is frozen in a syndrome of victim and hero, trying to minimize the crime and defend own innocence. Forecki, *Spór o Jedwabne*, 135-136.

\(^{54}\) It included the understanding that accepting collective responsibility is a moral rather than a legal act.

\(^{55}\) Such public apology can be understood as an instance of the ‘ritual of reconciliation’ (Bjoren Krondorfer, *Remembrance and reconciliation: Encounters between young Jews and Germans* (New Have: Yale University
willingness of elites to “live without lies” (Source 9.21), but it can hardly be described as a
generalized approach for the entire population, or even for its elites. The question of apology
was discussed with relation to the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the pogrom
on 10 July 2001. The representatives of the critical camp welcomed the commemoration as a
necessary step in cleansing the dark past, while proponents of the defensive stance rejected
it, sometimes using nationalist tropes, describing it as a scandal, serving Jewish interests. In
the end, the commemorative event was held, and the left-wing president of Poland
Aleksander Kwaśniewski offered an apology:

“Let us all be the citizens of Jedwabne today. (…) This is why today, the President of the Republic of
Poland, I beg pardon. I beg pardon in my own name and in the name of those Poles whose conscience
is shattered by that crime. In the name of those who believe that one cannot be proud of the glory of
Polish history without feeling, at the same time, pain and shame for the evil done by Poles to
others.”

Kwaśniewski apologized for the crime committed by Poles on their Jewish neighbors in
presence of the Ambassador of Israel to Poland, Szewach Weiss, and left-wing and liberal
politicians, using the ‘pride for shame’ argument and the moral discourse. It is important to
mention that no high representatives of the Catholic Church were present at that
commemoration (while Jewish and protestant churches were represented), nor any
representatives of right-wing parties. The inhabitants of Jedwabne did not take part either.

3. The backlash of discussion in the debates about Fear (2008) and
Golden Harvest (2011)
Within his two subsequent books, Gross extended his scope of interest and argument to post-
war anti-Semitism and the Kielce pogrom in 1946, and to the indifference of the Polish
society towards such acts of violence (Fear), and towards the question of economic profit on
the victims of the Holocaust during and after the war (Golden Harvest). The fact that these
subsequent books were published, discussed (although the extent of the follow up
discussions did not equal the one about Jedwabne), and not completely rejected is surely due

Press, 1995), 20) or as a ‘political ritual of atonement’ (Bartosz Korzeniowski, Polityczne rytuały pokuty w
perspektywie zagadnienia autonomii jednostki (Political rituals of atonement in the perspective of individual
autonomy) (Poznań, 2006), 19-20). Such apologies often serve current political needs, and do not necessarily
correspond to the position of communities in whose name political actors perform them. Forecki, Spór o
Jedwabne, 31-32.


57 While the Catholic Church organized in May 2001 a common prayer of the Episcopate in Warsaw’s Church of
All Saints, the absence of its representatives at the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Jedwabne’s
pogrom is telling for its overall position in this debate.
to the fact that the debate about Jedwabne transformed the public sphere, extending the scope of possible discussion.

The publication of *Fear*, by lay Catholic publisher *Znak*,\(^{58}\) provoked heated reactions, even if the debate lasted shorter than in the case of *Neighbors*, from January (book’s publication) to April 2008.\(^{59}\) Gross was criticized again for an allegedly ‘emotional’ treatment of the subject, and for using a ‘Publizistik,’ pamphlet-like style, instead of writing a pure historical (i.e. neutral) essay. Even more than in the case of *Neighbors*, a number of historians, who were in principle not opposed to discussing post-war pogroms of Jews, were skeptical towards Gross’s argument because they thought that his explanation was one-dimensional, based on the assumption of an intrinsic Polish anti-Semitism (e.g. Bożena Szaynok, in her publications in center-left *Gazeta Wyborcza*\(^{60}\)), not backed by other contextual elements. Also Paweł Machcewicz suggested that it was a pity that Gross’s nonchalant style and attitude to sources was a gift for all those keen to reject his thesis.\(^{61}\) Machcewicz thought that because of Gross’s harsh accusatory tone, *Fear* would not contribute to reflection or to further examination of collective historical conscience launched with the Jedwabne debate.

The liberal and left-wing defenders of Gross’s point of view, e.g. historian Jerzy Jedlicki, claimed that he only used strong words and statements in order to provoke a debate among a non-specialist, broad public, about Polish-Jewish relations.\(^{62}\) Furthermore, they pointed to the fact that valuable studies on Polish-Jewish relations had been published, but had gone unnoticed by the broad public because of their neutral, scientific style.\(^{63}\)

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\(^{58}\) Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, in an open letter directed to *Znak*’s editor-in-chief Henryk Woźniakowski criticized *Znak* for publishing a book that to his mind would stir the demons of anti-Semitism and anti-Polonism alike. Jarosław Gowin, former editor-in-chief of *Znak*, and a liberal-conservative politician seconded this opinion and concluded that if it were his decision (as he was previously the editor-in-chief of *Znak*), he would not have published this book. After TVN24, [http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/gowin-nie-wydalbym-strachu,46454.html](http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/gowin-nie-wydalbym-strachu,46454.html), accessed on August 11, 2014.

\(^{59}\) Paczowski, “Phantoms of the past.”

\(^{60}\) Agnieszka Kołodyńska, “Jak to widzi Gross (How Gross sees it),” interview with Bożena Szaynok, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 8, 2006; or Bożena Szaynok, “Gross-moralista, a nie historyk (Gross is a moralist, not a historian),” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 25, 2008.


\(^{62}\) Jerzy Jedlicki, “Tylko tyle i aż tyle (Only this, which is so much),” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, January 27, 2008.

\(^{63}\) For historian Andrzej Friszke it was the case of the book of Anna Landau-Czajka, *W jednym stali domu... Koncepcje rozwiązywania kwestii żydowskiej w publizystyce polskiej lat 1933-1939* (They lived in one house... The conceptions of resolution of the Jewish question in Polish Publizistik 1933-1939) (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN 1998). Andrzej Friszke, “Gross i chłopcy narodowcy (Gross and the nationalist boys),” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 23, 2008.
In this debate, the voices rejecting Gross’s arguments were particularly strong, and overpowered the critical ones, subscribing to the discourse of morality and responsibility, even if the latter could still be heard. A number of moves were used to discredit *Fear* (even without reading it), in order to circumvent the very need to discuss it, or present a proper response. They came not only from the ‘defensive’ camp of historians or *Publizists*, but also from public institutions, which in the previous (left-wing) political constellation were more sympathetic to Gross’s claims. First of all, after the publication of *Fear*, IPN’s historians and hierarchy strongly criticized it as unprofessional. Janusz Kurtyka, IPN’s Director since 2005 went as far as calling Gross a ‘vampire of historiography’ in a news emission of a popular radio station RMF FM. IPN even published a book, *Po Zagładzie (After the Holocaust)*, written by a radical right-wing historian Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, promoting it as an alternative to Gross’s book. One of the young radical IPN historians, Piotr Gontarczyk, reviewed Chodakiewicz’s book, and claimed that it was objective and analytical, in contrast to the supposed lack of knowledge and manipulation of historical facts by Gross. Other renowned historians criticized Chodakowski’s book, notably two former IPN historians, Machcewicz and Dariusz Libionka, who stopped working at the Institute after the appointment of Kurtyka, in 2005. Machcewicz criticized Chodakiewicz’s thesis that the Jews were responsible (for a number of reasons) for what happened to them, as well as his choice and use of the sources. He asked why IPN engaged public money and authority in promoting such one-sided and manipulative publication. Libionka described Gross’s work as valuable interpretative essay and used even stronger words against Chodakiewicz’s publication, calling it “ridiculous” and “mediocre,” agreeing with Machcewicz that it was shameful for IPN to promote such a propagandist approach over scientific research. In another intervention, together with fellow historian of Polish-Jewish relations Bożena

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69 Dariusz Libionka, “Ci nie są z ojczyzny mojej (These ones are not from my fatherland),” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 2-3, 2008.
Szaynok, who wrote the first book about the Kielce pogrom, Libionka described Chodakiewicz’s book as written with an ideological thesis, “and if the facts did not comply with this thesis, then too bad for the facts.”\(^70\) Szaynok added that Chodakiewicz’s work was out of touch with the historical reality.

All in all, in the Jedwabne debate, IPN, and its historians, such as Machcewicz, were closer to the ‘critical’ stance, and contributed with their research to uncovering the dark past. However, once Kurtyka became director of IPN, the institute drifted towards the ‘affirmative’ stances of the ‘politics of history,’\(^71\) promoted by the conservative government of the PiS since 2005.\(^72\) Many of its former historians left, and were replaced by young, radical and nationalist ones. This was clearly visible in the debate surrounding Fear, during which IPN employees, such as Gontarczyk, supported the ‘defensive’ position.

Another interesting development followed the publication of Fear. The public prosecutor from Kraków, where Fear’s publisher Znak is based, was asked to review the accusation that the book was slanderous to the Polish nation, by imputing to it participation, organization or responsibility for Nazi crimes, such an offense being prohibited by the article 132a of the Penal Code.\(^73\) This article was introduced in the Penal Code by the lustration law of 18 October 2006, on top of the article 133, which already prohibited offending, disrespecting or deriding the nation or the state.\(^74\) The introduction of this article

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\(^71\) The concept of ‘politics of history’ was coined by a group of young conservative intellectuals around mid-2000s. It was a reaction to the rise of the critical approach to history, within the Jedwabne debate, among other things. ‘Politics of history’ obtained a strong political leverage when it was included by the conservative party PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, Law and Justice) of the Kaczyński brothers, in the electoral programme of PiS in 2004, and let the party win the legislative elections in 2005. During their government between 2005-2007, ‘politics of history’ became one of the leading public policies of the government, promoting one specific vision of the past in society: an exclusively positive and heroic one.

\(^72\) This change was in line with the wish expressed by conservative historian Andrzej Nowak in 2001 in the Jedwabne debate, when he said that IPN under Leon Kieres was on the side of critical history (investigating Jedwabne) and not on the side of monumental, heroic history. Even though Nowak said that IPN should be doing ‘scientific’ history, he implied that it should reach the conclusions of monumental rather than critical history. Andrzej Nowak, “Westerplatte czy Jedwabne (Westreplatte or Jedwabne)?” Rzeczpospolita, August 1, 2001.

\(^73\) Article 132a, Penal Code: “Kto publicznie pomawia Naród Polski o udział, organizowanie lub odpowiedzialność za zbrodnie komunistyczne lub nazistowskie, podlega karze pozbawienia wolności do lat 3 (Whoever publicly imputes to the Polish nation the participation, organization or responsibility for the communist or Nazi crimes shall be punished with imprisonment of up to three years).”

\(^74\) The type of legal provision expressed in article 133 is not novel in the Polish Penal code, and exists in other countries too, however the one proposed in 132a does not. Ireneusz Krzemiński, “Kontroversje prawne wokół przestępstwa polegającego na pomawianiu narodu o popełnienie zbrodni (Legal controversies around a crime of
by the PiS government, at the request of the nationalist member of the government coalition, the LPR (Liga Polskich Rodzin, the League of Polish Families), was explicitly linked to Gross’s books. Furthermore, its unprecedented formulation (prohibition of accusing the nation of a crime) was broadly opposed because it could have created an obstacle to research by excluding a range of difficult historical topics from the scope of scientific investigation. In the end, the case against Gross was classified without leading to prosecution, but Machcewicz qualified the very fact of launching this investigation as “a gloomy grotesque and disgrace of the Polish state.” Soon after, Janusz Kochanowski, the Ombudsman, referred the article 132a to the Constitutional Court, to assess its compatibility with the Constitution (notably with the article 54 protecting freedom of speech, and the article 73 protecting freedom of scientific research). The article 132a was deemed unconstitutional, thus annulled, on 19 September 2008.

The most virulent and frontal attacks against Fear came from the extreme circles of nationalist Catholic Publizists and historians, and especially Jerzy Robert Nowak, who maintained that Gross’s book was “anti-Polish, and anti-Catholic”. On his lecture tour of Poland, he held a number of rallies or conferences in churches (benefitting from, to say the least, implicit support of the Church’s hierarchy), during which he tried to mobilize Polish people against what he thought was a ‘Jewish attack,’ and against Gross who, in his words, was “willing to destroy real Polish patriotism.”

Forecki qualified this situation, and the whole debate about Fear, as imbued with the theses of the conservative ‘politics of history’ of the PiS, promoted by its government between 2005 and 2007. The ‘politics of history,’ was characterized by the negation of ‘critical patriotism’ and the promotion of a patriotism affirming the national past. The

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75 Gross’s book Neighbors was used as an example motivating this proposal in the parliamentary debate over this article. For that reason it can be called ‘lex Gross.’ Krzemiński, “Kontrwersje prawne.”
77 Interestingly Kochanowski was appointed as Ombudsman in 2006 by the PiS, but at times he showed his ideational independence from the conservative party.
78 Request dated 15 January 2007, reference RPO-545868-II-06/ST.
79 Piotr Żytnicki, “Ideolog Radia Maryja z wykładem w Białym Kościele (The ideologist of Radio Maryja with a lecture in the White Church),” Gazeta Wyborcza, April 28, 2008.
80 As reported in the press, e.g. Małgorzata I. Niemczyńska, “Żydzia nas atakują! Trzeba się bronić (Jews attack us! We need to defend ourselves)” Gazeta Wyborcza, February 11, 2008.
81 Forecki, Od Shoah do Strachu, 420-421.
impact of the ‘politics of history’ prompted: a reconfiguration of the approach of IPN; the change of the tone of articles published in right-wing daily *Rzeczpospolita* (where the Jedwabne debate was more extensive than the one about *Fear*), linked to the emergence of a strong group of national conservative historians and Publizists; and a backlash of willingness to deal with historical white spots and dark pages, despite the positive antecedents of the Jedwabne debate.

When it comes to the latest debate, following the publication of *Golden Harvest*, a handful of arguments that appeared before were used again in order to discredit or support Gross’s work. While his methodology of thick description was criticized by some for leading to too many generalizations, and his style of writing as being too emotional, and not ‘scientific’ enough, he was praised by others for pushing the discussion further. Another parallel between *Golden Harvest* and *Fear* is that immediately after its publication, a complaint was lodged at the public prosecutor, this time based on article 133 of the Penal code, as the article 132a had been annulled. The plaintiffs claimed that the good name of Poland was endangered by Gross’s book. Once more though, the prosecutor did not find statements that would show the intention of accusing the whole nation of participation in Nazi crimes in Gross’s book. The prosecutor concluded that the book did not contain any insulting statements towards the Polish nation defined as “all citizens of Poland.”

The crucial topic of *Golden Harvest* and of the surrounding debate was not whether the killings of Jews by Poles during the war had happened, but whether it had or had not been the social norm of that time and what this would imply (i.e. the inherent Polish anti-Semitism). Furthermore, the book focused on a new motive, bringing down yet another taboo – the question of the transfer of wealth from Jews to Poles during and after the war. The main discussion concerned the instances of killing of Jews by Poles during the war, and

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82 Some specialists of the topic discussed in *Golden Harvest* claimed that Gross was not a historian, because he did not uncover new facts (e.g. Paweł Reszka and Michał Majewski. “Gross niczego nie odkrył (Gross did not discover anything),” Interview with Martyna Rusiniak-Karwat, *Rzeczpospolita*, February 1, 2011). Commentators more sympathetic to Gross’s argument, mostly on pages of centre-left *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Polityka*, said that no matter whether historian or not, or ‘historian from behind his desk,’ using mostly secondary sources (Jarosław Kurski, “Życie w polskich rękach (Life in Polish hands),” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 8-9, 2011), Gross managed to play the social role of a true historian, provoking a debate about the past within the society (Adam, Leszczyński, “Czy Gross jest historykiem (Is Gross a historian)?” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 2, 2011). These considerations were already raised before, when Gross was ‘accused’ of being a sociologist and not a historian, also because using emotional style and oral history sources. (cf. note 49).

the appropriation of the wealth of those deported. Another theme of the book was the post-war ‘diggers’ of the collective Jewish tombs close to the concentration camps, searching for lost jewelry not retrieved by the Nazis. While many commentators tried to disprove the argument about the ‘diggers,’ allegedly inspired by a photo (Figure 1), the origins of which could not be properly corroborated, most of them rightly assessed that the topic of ‘cemetery hyenas’ was not the main question of the book despite of the fact that its title could have suggested otherwise. A constitutional lawyer and liberal Wojciech Sadurski qualified the question of digging up gold from collective tombs as a matter of aesthetics, rather than ethics. The polemical exchange of opinions between Sadurski and Gontarczyk on pages of Rzeczpospolita was one of the strongest direct and personal polemics in this debate.

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84 As explained by the editors of Gazeta Wyborcza, this photo was first used by its reporters Marcin Kowalski and Piotr Głuchowski as an illustration of their article “Gorączka złota w Treblince (Gold rush in Treblinka),” (June 4, 2008) which discussed cases of stealing from massive tombs around Treblinka, the Nazi extermination camp. The reporters received it from Tadeusz Kiryluk, former director of Muzeum Męczeństwa Żydów w Treblince (the Museum of Jewish Suffering in Treblinka). Reporters of Rzeczpospolita, Michał Majewski and Paweł Reszka investigated this photo in two articles: “Zagadka starego zdjęcia (The riddle of an old picture),” January 21, 2011, and “Tajemnica zdjęcia z Treblinki (The mystery of the picture from Treblinka),” February 27, 2011. They presented two alternative explanations: that the photo depicted the cleaning of the grounds around the camp, after the chase after ‘diggers’ near Treblinka (which is based on a different testimony of Kiryluk than the one for Gazeta Wyborcza), or that it was not necessarily taken around Treblinka and it did not picture the chase after ‘diggers.’

85 Wojciech Sadurski, “Błotne żniwa (Muddy harvest),” Rzeczpospolita, February 27, 2011.
Figure 1 The photograph of the alleged ‘diggers’ of Treblinka

For conservative *Publizists*, specifically from *Rzeczpospolita*, the combination of these two topics (killing of Jews and stealing from their tombs) served as an argument against the book, because they believed that Gross was putting them on the same level, in order to develop a general accusation against Poles and abolish any gradation of evil. The conservative *Publizists* even suggested that this book (together with its progressive Catholic publishing house *Znak*) should be boycotted, putting forward a fallacious freedom of speech argument that everyone can write a book he or she wants, and anyone else can call for boycotting such a book. *Golden Harvest* was also criticized by IPN, whose ‘militant historians,’ e.g. Gontarczyk, accused Gross of providing false information and over-interpretation of facts. IPN endorsed another book by Chodakiewicz, claiming that it focused on the matters that Gross ‘forgot’ (i.e. Poles saving Jews).

Gross’s argument assumed that killing Jews was a social norm during the war, because oftentimes it was performed by people holding high social positions and prestige, and it was not performed secretly, as he explained in *Rzeczpospolita*. However, many commentators, including those otherwise open to Gross’s work, like Machcewicz, were skeptical towards extrapolating such generalizations from individual examples and labeling it a social practice, even in the countryside, despite the fact that society had indeed been passive or indifferent to such crimes. Machcewicz further suggested that Gross should put things in their historical context of atrophy of moral bonds, and not judge them by today’s moral standards, as he allegedly did. The proponents of stronger defensive stances in this debate, such as *Rzeczpospolita*’s Piotr Zychowicz, wanted to justify these killings by

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89 The expression ‘historien militant (activist historian)’ was coined by Georges Mink to illustrate the transformation of the nature of IPN, or at least the re-weighing of its priorities from a research institution, towards the prosecutor’s office. Georges Mink “Introduction,” in *L’Europe et ses passes douloureux*, ed. Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer (Paris: La Decouverte, 2007), 21.
91 Jan Tomasz Gross, “Przyjmijmy to z pokorą (Let’s accept it with repentance),” *Rzeczpospolita*, March 14, 2011.
93 Wiesław Władysław, “To jest polska luka (This is the Polish gap),” Interview with Andrzej Żbikowski, *Polityka*, January 11, 2011.
something other than anti-Semitism, e.g. the expected wealth that Jews were supposed to possess, yet it remains unclear how such argument would not be anti-Semitic in the first place or could constitute a valid moral justification.

The question of killing Jews being a social norm during the war is crucial, because it fostered a discussion of generalizations that Gross was making on the basis of selected examples, by using the anthropological method called ‘thick description.’ His hard-core conservative opponents, such as the right-wing Publizist Piotr Semka, criticized him for allegedly distorting the historical reality. However, as renowned historians of this period, Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, rightly point out, the question of generalizations is tricky and asymmetrical: it is most welcome to make positive generalizations about the wartime behavior of Poles and their help towards Jews (e.g. using the discourse of the ‘Just among nations,’ underscoring that Poles were the most numerous amid the nations whose help towards Jews during the war had been recognized by the Yad Vashem Institute), but it is perceived as utterly despicable to make negative generalizations. While Machcewicz suggested, not without reason, that Gross’s argument would benefit from being more balanced, because by being so critical it was merely a mirror image of the ‘affirmative’ stance and did not go beyond politically engaged historical account, Sadurski defended Gross’s approach, implying that if one focused on the dark moments of the past, there was no obligation to mention the glorious ones too.

The rejection of the argument about the social norm of killing Jews allowed the proponents of the defensive approach to maintain that only persons from the margins of society committed killings. This iteration of the defensive strategy, by putting the responsibility for the crimes on the back of the ‘mythical’ social margin, made it possible to

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94 Piotr Zychowicz, “Złote źniwa na sowieckiej granicy (Golden harvest at the Soviet border),” Rzeczpospolita, April 29, 2011.
96 Joanna Szczęsna, “Jak Polska długa i szeroka (As Poland is long and wide),” Interview with Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, Gazeta Wyborcza, January 8-9, 2011.
97 The figure of the ‘Just among nations’ is used in this context as a ‘magical’ weapon, a shield against any attempts of accusing Poles of war crimes towards the Jews. The article of Semka clearly illustrates this typical defensive argumentation. Semka claims that the high number of Polish ‘Justs’ shows that Poles had passed their wartime exam (“O czym Gross nie wspomniał (What Gross did not mention),” Rzeczpospolita, March 31, 2011). Forecki calls this strategy ‘hiding behind the trees in Yad Vashem’ as for every Just the Institute plants a tree in Jerusalem (Adam Leszczyński, “Dlaczego Gross do Polaków nie dotarł (Why did Gross not reach the Poles)?” Interview with Piotr Forecki, Gazeta Wyborcza, July 8, 2011).
98 Machcewicz, “Recenzja ostatecznej wersji “Złotych źniw”.”
99 Sadurski, “Błotne źniwa.”
preserve the ‘purity’ of the national community by excluding the criminals from its realm. The liberals criticized this ‘externalization of evil’, which aimed at dissociating Polishness from these crimes, anti-Semitism, and collective responsibility.

In this debate, again, the alleged aims of Gross were discussed. His proponents maintained their previously voiced stance that the aim of his book was to change Polish memory. His opponents accused him, among other things, of a willingness to negate the Polish suffering during the war. Rzeczpospolita’s editor-in-chief, Piotr Lisicki, in his acrobatic defense of the behavior of Poles during the war, implied that “after all there is something like innocence of all victims of crimes. It is equal, solidary and undivided.” The conservatives rejected any option of accusing Poles of war crimes against Jews as implying the innocence of some (Jews) and diminishing the sufferings of others (Poles). To their mind, it would undermine the moral sense of the war. Another possible motive of Gross, according to his nationalist critics, was that he wanted to contribute to prospective Jewish claims for the restitution of goods.

The most conservative Publizists criticized the proponents of the critical stance, and used often hardly camouflaged anti-Semitic stances. According to Piotr Zaremba, only ‘leftist-liberal’ circles perceived Gross’s work as important, because they wanted Poles to be ashamed. Rafał Ziemkiewicz, in turn, said that the same people who wanted to feel ashamed for the killings of Jews did not want to discuss the past of their parents and their contribution to the communist regime (as an example, he invoked a famous Polish film director, Agnieszka Holland, whose father was a Stalinist for a certain period of time, before becoming a revisionist communist). Bronisław Wildstein also frontally attacked Gazeta Wyborcza, and its open intellectual circle, for allegedly trying to push for atonement over the Jews, yet otherwise negating the assumption of collective responsibility with respect to

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100 Leszczyński, “Dlaczego Gross do Polaków nie dotarł.”
102 Brothers Filek suggested that this book shows to Poles their image from the perspective of others, Jews, in whose memory Poles strongly contributed to Holocaust. Gross also showed that members of one community could be among the victims and the wrongdoers at the same time, a thing refused by many right-wing commentators. Jacek Filek and Paweł Filek, “Gorzkie żniwa (Sour harvest),” Znak 671 (2011).
104 Zaremba, “Gross musi się liczyć z bojkotem.”
105 Rafał Ziemkiewicz, “Z cudzej piersi się wyrywało (It comes from a foreign heart),” Rzeczpospolita, March 27, 2011.
responsibility for communism.\textsuperscript{106} This argument covertly alluded to two assumptions: that children were responsible for their parents’ or even grandparents’ doings, and that Jews were responsible for communism, reviving the myth of Judeo-communism.\textsuperscript{107}

The supporters of Gross’s arguments, namely in \textit{Gazeta Wyborcza}, claimed that although Gross did not discover new historical facts, he uncovered a large part of the Polish war past for a broad ‘educated public\textsuperscript{108} and challenged the willingness to forget about the painful past. Historian Marcin Zaremba maintained that Poles needed Gross because without him their comfort would be higher, but their intellectual life poorer.\textsuperscript{109} And Juliusz Kurkiewicz concluded that while the debate concerning \textit{Golden Harvest} consisted of a repetition of old arguments, leading to a rapid end of the discussion, it had a crucial value for Polish society, especially for the young generation, who grew gradually more used to the idea that Poles were massively indifferent or even hostile towards Jews during the war.\textsuperscript{110} This was also the opinion of Dominika Kozłowska, the editor-in-chief of \textit{Znak} (also this book’s publisher), who sustained that the debate following the publication of \textit{Golden Harvest} was considerably different from its predecessors.\textsuperscript{111} She believed that society was in a substantially different place during this debate than during previous ones, because despite all aforementioned controversies, no one questioned the active Polish participation in the killing of Jews anymore. She linked this change not only to previous debates about Gross’s books, but also to the earlier mentioned article of Błoński from 1987, saying that the work he had launched had finally started bearing fruit. Despite this positive appreciation, one could rather compare the debate about \textit{Golden Harvest} to that about \textit{Fear} than to the debate about \textit{Neighbors}, in terms of massive domination of radically historically apologetic interventions rejecting Gross’s arguments, over critical ones supporting his conclusions.

Without doubt, the breadth and the content of the three aforementioned debates allows to conclude that dealing with the dark past in Poland is becoming part of building a revised national historical memory, but that a strong polarization of opinions on the approach to Polish history still prevails. Some even called the historic research on Polish

\textsuperscript{107} Liberal Paweł Śpiewak in his \textit{Żydokomuna (Judeo-communism)} (Warszawa: Czerwone i Czarne, 2012) shows how after the First World War, the myth of Judeo-communism replaced other anti-Semitic clichés.
\textsuperscript{108} Leszczyński, “Czy Gross jest historykiem.”
\textsuperscript{109} Marcin Zaremba, “Biedni Polacy na żniwach (Poor Poles at harvest),” \textit{Gazeta Wyborcza}, January 14, 2011.
\textsuperscript{110} Juliusz Kurkiewicz, “Rok biograficzny (The year of biographies),” \textit{Gazeta Wyborcza}, December 30, 2011.
\textsuperscript{111} Dominika Kozłowska, “Po co nam Gross (What do we need Gross for)?” \textit{Znak} 670 (2011).
participation in killing Jews during the war, “jedwabieńska szkoła historyczna (Jedwabne’s historical school),” in order to discredit its subject matter and achievements, equating it with the ‘politics of shame.’

On this note, the seventieth anniversary of the Jedwabne pogrom in 2011 permits to reach only a mixed conclusion. While it was marked by the presence of a Catholic bishop, the speeches made furthered the idea of ‘keeping the right proportions,’ in the words of Father Adam Boniecki, who is otherwise a representative of progressive Catholicism.

The conservative-liberal president in office, Bronisław Komorowski, from the PO (Platforma Obywatelska, the Civic Platform), in his letter, read by his envoy for the occasion, the late Tadeusz Mazowiecki, took a slightly different angle from Aleksander Kwaśniewski 10 years before, when he underlined the question of keeping the right proportions:

“It took a long time before we understood that accepting the guilt does not cross out Polish martyrology and Polish heroism in the fight with German and Soviet occupiers. That it does not imply the relativism in the domain of guilt or reversing proportions in assessment of historical merits and sins.”

One thing did not change, the inhabitants of Jedwabne were still absent.

4. Critical patriotism – a possible Polish version of constitutional patriotism?

The debates about Polish-Jewish relations, and especially the one about Jedwabne, were important catalysts of considerations over the nature of patriotism. Before analyzing the precise arguments about patriotism that were raised in the three debates, the discussion needs to be set in the context of three influential essays published in the 1980s that provided bases for the conceptualization of ‘critical patriotism.’

4.1 The discussions over Polish-Jewish relations and patriotism, initiated in the 1980s

In the 1980s, a certain liberalization of the public sphere occurred and a number of important articles were published. Three significant essays, written by Jan Józef Lipski (1981), Jerzy Jedlicki and Jan Błoński (both in 1987) discussed the collective

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112 Sławomir Cenckiewicz, one of the militant historians of IPN, used this expression to object inviting Gross to a panel discussion organized by IPN about the Warsaw ghetto uprising. “Antypolonizm z kasy III RP (Antipolonism funded by the Third Republic),” Historia Do Rzeczy, July 31, 2013.

113 Adam Boniecki, “Grzech Kaina (The sin of Cain),” Tygodnik Powszechny, July 12, 2011.

114 “Długo trwało, zanim zrozumieiliśmy, że przyznanie do winy nie przekreśla polskiej martyrologii i polskiego bohaterstwa w walce z niemieckim i sowieckim okupantem. Że nie oznacza relatywizacji win i wywrócenia proporcji w ocenie historycznych zasług i grzechów.” Boniecki, “Grzech Kaina.”

115 Jan Józef Lipski, “Dwie ojczyzny, dwa patriotyzmy (uwagi o megalomanii narodowej i ksenofobii Polaków) (Two fatherlands, two patriotism (comments on national megalomania and xenophobia of Poles),)” NOVA
responsibility of Poles, and their patriotism, in the context of their relationship with other nations, and Jews in particular.

**True patriotism versus national megalomania – Jan Józef Lipski**
The essay “Two fatherlands, two patriotisms” by Lipski, an important figure of the post-Solidarność left, was first published in the émigré Parisian Kultura, and then republished in Poland in Samizdat publications. It constituted one of the first calls for a modern re-definition of patriotism and opposed two visions of the country and of the allegiance towards it. Lipski contrasted a closed, nationalist version of patriotism, based on national megalomania, to a ‘true,’ civic and liberal patriotism that for him was not only defined by the relationship towards one’s fellows, but also towards ‘others:

“I think that chauvinism, national megalomania and xenophobia that constitutes a hatred towards everything that is foreign, i.e. national egoism, cannot be linked to the Christian obligation of love for your fellow, but patriotism can. (…) Patriotism results from love – and it should lead to love, otherwise it is an ethical deformation.”

Lipski started with this incompatibility statement, in order to contrast it with the “formula of national ‘patriotic stupidity’” that he defined as “miłość do wszystkiego co polskie (love of everything that is Polish).” For him, the idea of loving things just because they were Polish was contradictory to true patriotism, which implied respect and love for tradition, but required a critical evaluation of the past and the selection of elements of this tradition. He believed that silencing shameful elements of the past contributed to national megalomania and destroyed the national ethos. This brought him to discussing the importance of acknowledging Polish guilt for past wrongdoings, even if it were lesser than the guilt of the others. For Lipski different elements of ‘national megalomania’ could be found in Poland, namely in the Romantic heritage of Polish messianism (the feeling of superiority from the simple fact of being Polish, combined with religious exultation). His recommendations of the critical approach to patriotism, based on moral values, can be likened to the


philosophical stance of ethical patriotism, underscoring the necessity of uncovering past wrongdoings and responding to them.

‘Pride for shame’ – a liberal argument for accepting collective responsibility and the possibility of separating pride from shame – Jerzy Jedlicki

Jerzy Jedlicki is an important Polish intellectual who from revisionist Marxist positions evolved towards more liberal ones. In his article, published in 1987 in the newly legalized Res Publica (the publication had existed since 1979 as underground press), Jedlicki dealt extensively with the question of collective responsibility and whether human communities could be held responsible for the deeds of their ancestors. He discussed whether pride and shame could be separated: whether it was possible to reject collective responsibility for the past wrongdoings, while keeping pride in the successes of one’s ancestors intact.

Jedlicki came to the conclusion that pride could theoretically be dissociated from shame, but such dissociation would imply a peculiar ‘choice of tradition.’ This ‘choice’ would not constitute a critical re-evaluation of the past, but a manipulation (silencing) of some parts of history with a specific political purpose, often activated as a defense against criticism. He quoted anti-Semitism as one such silenced question, and concluded that

“The Polish intelligentsia, historians included, has been organically incapable to deal with the problem of massive anti-Semitism in Poland in the 19th and 20th centuries.”

He also challenged the defensive assumption that anti-Semitism was only present on the margins of the nation, and never infiltrated its ‘healthy core.’

Jedlicki took Germany as an example of successful recognition of the collective responsibility of a nation, because it was also the case of those who were in no sense responsible for what happened under the Nazi regime, or were even persecuted during these times. This led him to discuss the question of the re-emergence of German patriotism in the mid-1980s. He referred to a meeting in Aschaffenburg in May 1986, during which German intellectuals reflected whether it was possible to be a German patriot after Auschwitz (“Patriotismus nach Auschwitz?”), to which the most common answer was that

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119 “Polska inteligencja, historyków nie wyłączając, zdaje się od lat organicznie niezdolna do uporania się z problemem masowego antysemityzmu w Polsce XIX i XX wieku (...)” Jedlicki, “Dziedzictwo i odpowiedzialność zbiorowa.”
“(...) the attachment to one’s fatherland implied not only the pride in its historical and cultural accomplishments, but also the shame for its crimes.”

Jedlicki suggested that the process of critical re-evaluation of heritage should begin in Poland and that the responsibility for the difficult past should start being accepted. He concluded that an affirmative approach to the past could sometimes be profitable for the collective morale of the community, but never for its further development, for which a sound knowledge of history was needed.

Indifference as guilt in the Polish-Jewish war relations – Jan Błoński

Jan Błoński initiated the process of ‘unlying’ Polish-Jewish relations in 1987 with his essay “Poor Poles look at the Ghetto,” published in Tygodnik Powszechny: it is important to note that this process started in a Catholic publication, by a Catholic writer. Błoński’s essay started from the reflection over the words of Polish poet Czesław Miłosz, who advocated a purification of the Polish land, tarnished by blood, to be performed by Polish poetry. Miłosz referred to the Holocaust, which happened on Polish land, even if the Poles did not instigate it. The national memory should be cleansed, but the genocide must be remembered, because a community is built thanks to the remembrance of the past. Błoński continued his argument with a reference to two significant poems of Miłosz: “Campo di Fiori,” discussing the behavior of the Poles towards the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, and “Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto” (Poor Christian looks at the ghetto), concerning the question of fear. He distinguished between four types of fear: fear of death and fear of guilt, respectively corresponding to fear of the fate of the Jews, and fear of being condemned for what happened to them (or at least for being indifferent to it). He criticized the fact that the Poles rejected this reflection, in the name of their ‘good name,’ because they wanted to be beyond of the scope of condemnation.

120 “(…) przywiązanie do ojczyzny implikuje nie tylko dumę z jej historycznych i kulturalnych osiągnięć, ale także wstyd za dokonane zbrodnie.” Jedlicki, “Dziedzictwo i odpowiedzialność zbiorowa.”

121 Public acceptance of national self-criticism seems to be a sine qua non condition to launch the process of uncovering the dark past and incorporating it into the collective memory. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, Frames of remembrance, (New Brunswick and London, 1994).

122 The title of Błoński’s essay “Poor Poles look at the Ghetto” toys with the title of Miłosz’ poem. This motive was often used in the aforementioned debates: Dominika Wielowieyska, “Biedny Polak patrzy na obcych (Poor Pole looks at aliens),” interview with Ireneusz Krzemieński, Gazeta Wyborcza, May 25, 2009; Adam Boniecki and Michał Okoński, “Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na Jedwabne (Poor Christian looks at Jedwabne),” interview with archbishop Henryk Muszyński, Tygodnik Powszechny, March 23, 2010; Marcin Zaremba, “Biedni Polacy na źniwach (Poor Poles on harvest),” Gazeta Wyborcza, January 17, 2011; Semka, “Biedny Polak patrzy na Grossa.”
Błoński implied that there was a need to understand both the guilt and people’s avoidance of it. He argued that Poles had to confront the ‘sin of indifference’ and stop justifying their passive behavior by the wartime context. They needed to say: “yes, we are guilty” and beg for forgiveness. He also discussed the difference between complicity in crime and sharing the guilt for it. One can be guilty of not doing enough to stop the crime, for instance. And for this reason, there is an obligation of cleansing.

The three texts of Lipski, Jedlicki and Błoński were the first ones to comprehensively and critically discuss the approach of the Poles towards their past and their relationship with the neighboring nations. They were invoked in the Jedwabne debate, as intellectual inspiration for Gross’s approach, deemed overly critical by his opponents. Later on, the conservative intellectuals labeled this approach ‘critical patriotism,’ within their ‘politics of history.’

4.2 ‘Critical patriotism’ – from the 1980s to Jedwabne

The ideas of Lipski, Jedlicki and Błoński, were those of the ‘critical camp’ in the debate about Jedwabne in that they were all open to uncovering difficult truths concerning Polish-Jewish relations and to confronting anti-Semitism. These three authors paved the way for the ‘discourse of morality’ and the acceptance of the collective responsibility for the crime. The question of accepting collective responsibility raised by Gross in Neighbours can be linked to Jedlicki’s ‘pride for shame’ argument and his suggestion to avoid strategies of denial or contextual justification of war crimes. Machcewicz, among others, subscribed to Jedlicki’s ethical theses, underscoring that

“if we wanted to participate in the national community, and in the pride of what is praiseworthy, we also have to remember the crimes committed by our fellows, even if it was an act of those in the margins (...) We have to remember, commemorate the victims, and explain the circumstances of the crime.”

The proponents of the critical stance rejected an affirmative approach to history, which was described by Lipski as impeding the improvement of the national community.

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123 Gross critically discussed the articles of Błoński, and Lipski, e.g. in “A tangled web,” 75-80.
125 Forecki, Spór o Jedwabne, 29.
126 “jeśli chcemy uczestniczyć w narodowej wspólnoście, dumie z tego co chwalebne, to musimy także pamiętać o zbrodniach popełnionych przez rodaków, nawet jeśli to był margines (...) pamiętać, oddać hołd ofiarom, wyjaśnić okoliczności”. Machcewicz, Wokół Jedwabnego, 17.
The question of accepting responsibility (or not) for the dark past, discussed in the debate about Jedwabne touched upon the question what a patriot should do. The ethical, critical approach advocated “accepting the dark side of the national past [as] a sign of collective maturity and moral duty,”127 to study the past critically and learn the lesson by “being a patriot of the country, not of the assassins.”128 The representatives of the ‘affirmative’ approach focused on the defense of the good name of the nation, and refused to acknowledge the crime.

The debate about Jedwabne paved the way for an acceptance of white spots of Polish history, and for a discussion of topics that had long been taboo in the public discourse. It also allowed to challenge patriotism of the old type (based on Romanticism and an ‘affirmative’ approach to history).129 In this respect, even Zdzisław Krasnodębski (one of the most prominent conservative intellectuals) concluded that Jedwabne marked the end of a certain vision of ‘Polishness’ (polskość) and of the fatherland.130 This conclusion was surprisingly close to the liberal one voiced by Marcin Król in a debate organized by Res Publica Nowa in 2001, with participation of Paweł Śpiewak and Marek Zaleski.131 These liberal authors voiced a criticism of the affirmative approach, and of the elites, particularly religious ones, skeptical of revising their thinking. The liberals presented a strong and coherent case for liberalism, pluralism and for the eradication of any traces of ethno-nationalism and anti-Semitism.132 Furthermore, Król predicated that any community that wanted to invoke its ‘Polishness’ or consider itself as ‘fatherland’ after Jedwabne would need to be built almost completely anew.

However, relatively quickly, the ‘window of opportunity’133 for open discussion closed. The opposition between the critical and defensive approaches became particularly acute. In this context, the conservative intellectuals conceptualized the idea of ‘critical patriotism,’ to give a catchy, yet derogatory, name to the liberal proponents of the ethical and critical approach. In the eyes of conservative intellectuals ‘critical patriotism’ was characterized by a “revisionist approach to Polish history,”134 because it promoted a critical

128 Bikont, My z Jedwabnego, 248.
131 “Akt skruchy i co dalej (The act of repentance and what’s more),” the debate with participation of Marcin Król, Paweł Śpiewak and Marek Zalewski, Res Publica Nova, July 2001.
134 Gawin, “O pożytkach i szkodliwości.”
re-evaluation of the past, in the continuation of the tradition of 19th century ‘myth destroyers,’ and writer Stefan Żeromski among others. Conservative philosophers presented the label ‘critical patriotism’ as a counter-concept of the ‘affirmative’ approach to the past and history. The intention behind coining this label was to discredit anyone daring to question national myths and traditions.

Dariusz Gawin discussed the concept of ‘critical patriotism’ in 2005, in his assessment of the three texts by Lipski, Jedlicki and Błoński.\textsuperscript{135} While he conceded that the approach they promoted could contribute to civic behavior, he suggested that it was not adapted to the actual political reality, or to international relations. In his particularly critical discussion of Lipski’s thesis, he criticized him for promoting an excessively skeptical approach towards national symbols and their usages. The main axis of criticism was aimed at Lipski’s discussion of patriotism. According to Gawin, it mixed virtues coming from different orders: Christian caritas, which is the imperative of loving the other, with patriotism, which belongs to the political realm. In consequence, Gawin suggested that Lipski’s approach to patriotism would lead to political naïveté, because in politics it is impossible to love the other unconditionally, as countries participate in an international game of power, played according to the national interests. Gawin also criticized the construction of the ‘pride for shame’ argument concerning the collective responsibility. To his mind, it resulted from the fact that the liberals (i.e. Jedlicki) strove to link pride and shame to the acceptance of the moral responsibility for the past, because only in this way they were able to accept the community, and the nation. In consequence, to Gawin’s mind, the ‘patriotism of painful introspection’ would lead to the supremacy of ethics, making it impossible to use the category of national interest in politics. He characterized this approach as both humble (in recognizing one’s wrongdoings) and arrogant (because ethical unilateralism would prompt the belief that one’s will can transform one’s own community, and others). The final objection he presented to such a critical ethical approach was that it would enable a de-contextualization of historical events from a cause-consequence chain, thus allowing other nations to impose their reading of history on others who did not lead a sufficiently strong ‘politics of history.’ In his view, the ethical approach, promoting the critical introspection, had a damaging impact on the national community:

\textsuperscript{135} Gawin, “O pożytkach i szkodliwości.”
“The community of sure things was supposed to be transformed into a community of doubt and hesitations; the community of pride into a community of shame. The demythologization and the criticism of national tradition and memory were performed so vehemently and efficiently that not much is left of the old model of the collective identity of Poles.”

In a way, by promoting the label and the specific reading of ‘critical patriotism,’ the conservative intellectuals demonstrated that their understanding of patriotism could not embrace the critical ethical approach to one’s community. The opposition between ‘critical patriotism’ and ‘affirmative patriotism’ that they conceptualized allowed them to evade the debate about ‘dark’ moments of the Polish past. They relegated this dark past to the camp of ‘critical patriots,’ which they considered to be marginal, and whom they accused of wanting to destroy (odbrązać) Polish history, its symbols and its heroes. Any critical patriotism must, in their view, be ‘moderate’ (according to conservative historian Wojciech Roszkowski, renowned author of school history textbooks), though they failed to specify what this moderation should consist of.

The ‘politics of history’ of the PiS, has promoted since the mid-2000s an affirmative approach towards Polish history and rejected its nemesis, the critical approach. One of the strongest impulses for the very conceptualization of ‘politics of history’ was the discussion about Jedwabne that allegedly unbalanced what the conservatives called the ‘right’ proportions, focusing more on Polish wrongdoings than successes. Marek A. Cichocki, in one of his programmatic articles about the ‘comeback of history,’ referred to Jedlicki’s ‘pride for shame’ argument, but in a reversed way. He tried to turn the axis of criticism against the liberals, implying that they rejected the collective memory during the democratic transition. From there he deduced that if there was no collective memory, then there could be no collective feeling of shame. Hence, to his mind, if one wanted people to accept the shame argument, then the pride argument had to precede it.

4.3 Is critical patriotism a Polish version of constitutional patriotism?

Clearly, the conceptualization of ‘critical patriotism’ by the conservative was not a profound contribution to the debate about patriotism. Nothing comparable to the German debate about

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136 “Wspólnota pewników miała zostać przekształcona we wspólnotę wahań i wątpliwości; wspólnota dumy we wspólnotę wstydę. Demitologizację i krytykę narodowej tradycji i narodowej pamięci robiono namiętnie i dobrze, do tego stopnia, że niewiele już zostało z dawnego modełu zbiorowej tożsamości Polaków.” Gawin “O pożytkach i szkodliwości.”

137 Konrad Rajca and Tomasz Stefanek, “Pojednanie wbrew prawdzie historycznej jest fałszem (The reconciliation against historical truth is false),” Interview with Wojciech Roszkowski, Historia i Media, April 11, 2008.

the sense of patriotism and on the proper object of allegiance took place in Poland. While both ‘constitutional’ and ‘critical’ conceptualizations of patriotism emerged in the context of a discussion of collective responsibility for the war crimes against the Jews, the answers to the question whether traditional patriotism was possible after Auschwitz and after Jedwabne varied considerably.

In the German case, the intellectuals conceptualized the idea of constitutional patriotism, because many believed that a new source of (national) pride and allegiance had to be found. Jürgen Habermas expressed it acutely, saying that: “the only form of patriotism that does not exclude us [Germans] from the West is constitutional patriotism.”139 Constitutional patriotism, which remains an object of vivid academic discussion, explored ways of going beyond traditional patriotism, by establishing the liberal-democratic regime or the constitutional order as the object of people’s allegiance.

In Poland, in the context of discussing Polish-Jewish war relations following the Jedwabne debate, references to constitutional patriotism were often patronizing, even when made by those close to the critical position. Historian and political scientist Anna Wolff-Powęska, an eminent expert of Polish-German relations, for instance, called constitutional patriotism a ‘prosthesis of patriotism,’ i.e. a meager substitute for a national form of patriotism.140 She implied that patriotism needed to be grounded in (pride of) history, because if it was not, then it was an Ersatz, unable to inspire political solidarity and the feeling of belonging. The uncovering of the Jedwabne pogrom, even if widely discussed, pushed the conservatives to coin the concept of ‘critical patriotism,’ giving it an openly negative connotation, and counter it with what they labeled an ‘affirmative approach.’ Other camps adopted the label ‘critical patriotism’ conceptualized by the conservatives. However, in this acceptance, ‘critical patriotism’ did not seek to replace traditional patriotism (apart from maybe for the most fervent proponents of the critical approach), but rather to be its complement, allowing the integration of negative elements to collective memory and identity. Thus, ‘critical patriotism’ cannot be perceived as close to ‘constitutional patriotism’ when it comes to finding a new object of allegiance. ‘Critical patriotism’ can rather be likened to ethical patriotism, which calls for a close moral scrutiny of one’s community.

139 Quoted after Heinrich August Winkler, “Państwo, naród i problem winy (State, nation and the problem of guilt),” Dziennik, June 21, 2006.
4.4 The relabeling of ‘critical patriotism’ into ‘mature patriotism’ – further commitment to uncovering the dark past

The debate about Jedwabne was a broad and important discussion. It was a first step towards recovering the dark past and including it into national collective memory and identity. It also fostered a reflection over the nature of patriotism. The defensive, conservative camp reacted to the process of uncovering the dark past by coining the label of ‘critical patriotism,’ trying to reject an allegedly too critical approach towards the national past. The impact of this concept, countered with an ‘affirmative patriotism’ within the conservative ‘politics of history,’ resulted in a backlash of discussion in the subsequent debates, following the publication of Fear and Golden Harvest. Within these debates the representatives of the defensive camp (critical to Gross) overpowered the critical camp, and undermined the thesis of collective responsibility and the ethical approach.

The contestation over the concept of patriotism, after the publication of Fear, and of Golden Harvest, continued mostly among Gross’s supporters from the ‘critical’ camp, challenging further the ‘obsession of innocence’ of the conservative camp. Adam Michnik, former intellectual dissident and the editor-in-chief of Gazeta Wyborcza, engaged in the discussion about Fear organized by Znak, the book’s publisher. Michnik supported Gross by saying that Fear was a book written by a Polish historian and patriot, going beyond patriotic-national-Catholic political correctness, in order to construct a better Poland without hatred. Adam Szostkiewicz, in his article published in Polityka with a significant title “Gross egzorcysta (Gross, the exorcist),” agreed that “Gross continued the great Polish tradition of ‘opening the wounds’ so that they did not scar without healing.” Szostkiewicz, a liberal Catholic Publizist contributing to Tygodnik Powszechny and Polityka, challenged the accusation voiced by the extremist and nationalist circles that Gross lacked patriotism, and that he attacked Poland and the Church. He defended Gross’s critical ‘vision of patriotism,’ in a liberal vein:

“[Gross’s] patriotism, self-critical to the point of pain and exaggeration, has the same right to be expressed in Poland as other forms of patriotism. For the moment it is in the minority, but in 10-20 years we will see what approach to our modern history will gain society’s approval.”

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142 “Gross wpisuje się w wielką i ważną polską tradycję ”rozdrapowania ran,” aby nie zablokSpo.ResponseBody};
143 “Lecz autokrytyczny, czasem do bólu i przesady, patriotyzm ma w Polsce takie samo prawo obywatelstwa jak inne patriotyzmy. Na razie patriotyzm Grossa może się okazać mniejszościowy, ale dopiero za 10–20 lat
The proponents of the ‘critical’ stance recognized being in the minority. However, the publications where they voiced their views, such as *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Polityka* maintained their open editorial line, and commitment to the critical stance and open discussion about patriotism. Yet, even if their ‘critical patriotism’ departed conceptually from traditional patriotism rooted in (unconditional) pride in one’s history, it remained defined as yet another kind of approach to national history, just a self-critical one.

In the debate that followed *Golden Harvest*, the proponents of the critical stance, recruiting from the same liberal and left-wing circles, insisted on the impact that Gross’s books and the follow-up debates had on the concept of patriotism. They re-labeled ‘critical’ patriotism as ‘mature’ patriotism. Kozłowska, the editor-in-chief of *Znak*, *Golden Harvest*’s publisher, underscored that only mature societies could deal with the uncovering of taboo topics through processes of open deliberation.144 Jarosław Kurski, deputy editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, suggested that Gross taught Poles ‘mature patriotism’ by arguing for the recognition of the duty of shame for dark moments of the past, and learning from them, and he explained that

“mature patriotism consists of the right to be proud of the [community’s] achievements, inextricably linked to the obligation of shame for the disgrace that we have done.”145

It is also interesting to note that this expression - ‘mature patriotism’ was the title of the section where *Gazeta Wyborcza* published all its articles concerning *Golden Harvest*. However, observing the semantic field of ‘mature patriotism,’ which continued to be defined with respect to the ‘pride for shame’ argument, it seems safe to conclude that it did not constitute a new conception of patriotism, but rather a re-labeling of ‘critical patriotism.’ The use of the qualifier ‘mature’ to describe this approach implied a process of critical reflection, and insisted on a cumulative effect of debates over the uncovering of the dark past for the broader public, resulting in extending the scope of debate and of acceptable topics. The proponents of mature patriotism from *Gazeta Wyborcza* such as liberal sociologist Katarzyna Wigura linked its importance to the question of understanding one’s
responsibility, and the fact that even if the Polish guilt towards Jews were lesser than the Nazi one, this would not absolve it completely.  

The open deliberation during the Jedwabne debate might have suggested the possibility that a critical approach to history would eventually replace the ‘affirmative’ one. However, from a diachronic perspective, the insights from two follow-up debates about *Fear* and *Golden Harvest* disprove this optimistic suggestion. Rather, after 2005, the Catholic-national *Publizists*, supported by a fraction of historians, seemed to use successful strategies to discredit Gross’s books, which made debates about them shorter, less content-based, and more polemical. In this essentially Polish-Polish quarrel, a strong polarization of opinions was visible between those who accepted the moral challenge, and those who rejected critical theses. The latter tried to frame the conflict as a Polish-Jewish quarrel, in order to exclude those who accepted the critical approach from the realm of Polishness, often in a hardly camouflaged anti-Semitic stance. As a result, the ethical ‘discourse of morality,’ and the acceptance of collective responsibility for past crimes, became largely limited to the pages of center and left-wing leaning publications.

All in all, the critical position did not disappear completely and its proponents re-labeled it as ‘mature.’ This act of conceptual relabeling did not promote a substantial morphological change in the nature of the concept, or its re-direction towards constitutional positions. It rather testified to a willingness to present ‘critical patriotism’ in a positive light without changing its essence, still very much rooted in national history, but accepting its dark pages. In sum, this conception of patriotism, even if close to the ethical position, did not challenge the *status quo* on the object of patriotism allegiance. Furthermore, because of the establishment of a coherent conservative intellectual framework that had a strong influence on public policies during the government of the PiS (2005-2007), focusing on an ‘affirmative’ approach and maintaining the ‘right proportions,’ but also later, due to the consolidation of circles of conservative *Publizists* and historians, the critical approach struggles to become a powerful counter-concept in its own right.

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