Jedwabne: Will The Right Question Be Raised?

Jan Gross. Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001.

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> The stupid dark masses will probably embark on crimes and madness. But let at least a handful of Polish intelligentsia protest before mankind and history.
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> —Eliza Orzeszkowa, 1881[1]

The publication of Jan Gross's *Neighbors* may well be one of the major sensations in recent historiography. On the most basic level, Gross has succeeded in transmitting in a most chilling manner the physical annihilation of a small Jewish community in northeastern Poland in the summer of 1941. He manages to shock the reader despite the seeming imperviousness to human suffering of the post-Second World War generation as a result of repeated exposure to the horrors and atrocities of the twentieth century. On another level the publication of *Neighbors* provoked a renewed debate about the nature of the millennium of Polish-Jewish relations.

Neighbors has had diametrically opposed impacts on the two protagonists. For the Jews it has served as yet another affirmation that the Holocaust was a crime perpetrated by most of Europe and not merely a Nazi, or even a German, aberration—a result of a millennium of Christian anti-Semitism. Hence the work upholds the self-image of the Jews as victims, which is accepted by the mainstream of Jewish historiography. For many Poles, however, the publication of *Neighbors* has been perceived as an assault on a historiography steeped in the national myth of the Poles as the quintessential victims, the "Christ nation" of Europe and the *Antemurale Christianitatis* of western civilization embodying Europe's

1. Quoted in Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1994) p. 38.

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highest spiritual values. Generations of Poles were brought up to believe that historic Poland, until its partition in the late eighteenth century, was the model of tolerant multiculturalism. As far as the twentieth century and the Second World War are concerned, the overwhelming consensus of Polish historiography is that Poland was the first country to resist Hitler and the only country to simultaneously confront the bloody tyrannies of Hitler and Stalin—a heroic, freedom-loving nation that sacrificed the cream of its youth in the forests of Katyn and the rubble of Warsaw and Monte Casino. Poles point out with great pride that, unlike Norway, Slovakia, or France, Poland never had a collaborationist regime acting as a Nazi puppet. As far as the Holocaust is concerned, Polish popular belief is that the Holocaust was primarily a Polish tragedy that resulted in the extermination and martyrdom of Poland's clergy and intellectuals such as Father Maximilian Kolbe. To the extent that popular Polish historiography has dealt with the Jewish aspect of the Holocaust, Poles have stressed that the extermination of the Jews was a purely German undertaking, while ethnic Poles did more than any other people to shelter Jews as witnessed by the preponderance of Poles among the "Righteous Gentiles" commemorated in the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. Thus, the Second World War affirmed within Polish historiography Poland's self-image of victimhood, martyrdom, and righteousness, supporting Adam Mickewicz's view of Poland as an "apostle among adulterers."

Given these very different historiographies of the Second World War and the Holocaust, it was clear that *Neighbors* would evoke very different reactions in the Polish and Jewish communities. Some Jewish analysts have taken the publication of *Neighbors* as final proof of the thesis of Israel's former prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir, that "the Poles imbibe anti-Semitism with their mother's milk." Others have seen the book as a mere affirmation of the anti-Semitism endemic to all of Europe's Christian culture. On the Polish side, the chilling images of ordinary Polish masses voluntarily carrying out Hitler's "Final Solution" and the suggestion that the Poles were not unlike many of their "less civilized" neighbors have shaken Poland's intellectual community to the core. Reactions varied: some have denied the whole event, claiming that the

entire episode is yet another attempt by "the Jews" to defame Poland; others such as Poland's primate, Jozef Cardinal Glemp, have repeated the line taken by the Catholic Church following the pogrom in Kielce. They explain the massacre as an unfortunate yet understandable consequence of Polish popular ire provoked by "Jewish" support for the Soviet Union and, later, for the imposition of communism on Poland (*Zydo-kommuna*). Discussing the trauma, perceived by many Poles as the work of communists of Jewish origin, Ewa Thompson notes that "In Poland, three names strike terror into the people's hearts: Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Jakub Berman [Stalin's henchman in Poland of Jewish origin].[2] Others such as the historian Tomasz Strzembosz, while clearly not condoning the brutality meted out to Jews, "explains" that the cause of the violence was "Jewish" betrayal of Poland and collaboration by "the Jews" with the Soviet authorities following the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939.[3] The belief that the Jews imposed communism on Poland is so widespread that Cardinal Glemp has gone so far as to suggest a "swap of apologies" whereby the Jews will apologize for their betrayal of Poland to communism, while the Poles will apologize for their violence against the Jews during the Second World War and the ensuing years. A third group of Polish intellectuals as well as most of the country's senior politicians have condemned the crime of Jedwabne and other episodes of Polish violence and collaboration against the Jews during the war and in its immediate aftermath, insisting that these were isolated cases.

While Jan Gross's *Neighbors* adds little to our existing knowledge of the Holocaust, nevertheless, its potential long-term implications may be profound and far-reaching. The immediate result may be to provoke yet another round of recriminations between Polish and Jewish intellectuals and yet another marathon of competitive victimhood. Should the impact of *Neighbors* be limited to such a possibility, the ultimate outcome will not be an exchange of mutual apologies as Cardinal Glemp suggests but, rather, an affirmation of old stereotypes and a continuation of the

2. Ewa Thompson, "Reflections on Richard Lukas' The Forgotten Holocaust," *Sarmatian Review* 18:2 www.ruf.rice.edu/sarmatian.
3. Tomasz Strzembosz, *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 January 2001.

"dialogue of the deaf" that has characterized much of the postwar era. A far more important potential impact of *Neighbors* is that it may open the door for a more objective historiography of Poland, much as Marcel Olphus's 1971 documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity* and Robert Paxton's *Vichy France*[4] helped France to face its unpalatable role during the Second World War, finally prompting President François Mitterrand to confess his own fascist past. The demythologizing revision of France's role during the Second World War helped the French polity to understand its complex legacy and, thus, reinforced French democracy and tolerance in the new multicultural age. A similar process occurred in Israel in 1979 when Yitzhak Rabin published his memoir, *Pinkas Sherut*, where he candidly described his role in the forceful eviction of Arabs from the Ramleh area.[5] Rabin's revealing memoir gave an impetus to a slew of Israeli "revisionist" historians to challenge the official mythology of the founding of the Jewish state. Books such as Benny Morris's, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*,[6] *Righteous Victims: A History of* the *Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1999*,[7] as well as Avi Shlaim's, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*,[8] and Yoram Hazony's, *The Jewish State: Struggle for Israel's Soul*[9] all played a crucial role in Israel's soul searching. They have led to a fundamental shift in Israel's perception of its war with the Palestinians and made the intellectual acceptance of a potential Palestinian state possible.

Whether Gross's *Neighbors* will catalyze a fundamental reevaluation of modern Polish history will very much depend on which facets of Jewish-Polish relationships the dialogue will focus. Thus far the dialogue seems to repeat the traditional accusations and counteraccusations of the anti-Semitic Polish role during the Holocaust and the communist Jewish role in the aftermath

4. Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard New Order 1940–1944* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1972).
5. Yitzhak Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1979).
6. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947–1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
7. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1999* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999).
8. Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: WW. Norton, 2000).
9. Yoram Hazony, *The Jewish State; the Struggle for Israel's Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

of the Second World War.[10] If the discussion goes no further, it seems that Gross's *Neighbors* will exacerbate negative stereotyping rather than lead to a constructive revision of Poland's modern history. Several weaknesses within the book cast doubt on how far-reaching its impact can be.

One problem is that the title of the book is deceptive. Although the Jews and the Poles were "neighbors" in the physical sense, in reality the Jews and the Gentiles occupied separate universes. Following the collapse of the insurrection of 1863 and the consequent ethnic determinant of Polish identity,[11] both Poles and Jews viewed each other as "the other" rather than as neighbors. The absence of neighborliness can be easily seen in Polish as well as Yiddish literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Polish authors, ranging from Boleslaw Prus to Wladyslaw Reymont,[12] represented the Jewish characters in their literature as clever, sly, parasitic—a distinctly alien presence within Polish society.[13] Yiddish writers, in turn, whether Sholem Asch, Y. L. Perets, or I. B. Singer[14] often presented the Polish peasant as a "half savage and half child" whose world was determined by the "here and now," while the Polish *Szlachta* was driven by its "pride and prejudice" with little real substance behind this pretentious façade. The Anglo-Jewish writer, Israel Zangwill, described the Polish *Szlachta* as "Beggars on Horseback." Thus, to refer to the Poles and Jews as "neighbors" is misleading. These were two communities separated by language, religion, and custom, two communities whose intercourse was limited to exchange on market days, an exchange that only deepened each community's existing stereotypes about the other.

Another problem with Gross's *Neighbors* is that, while it shockingly conveys the horrible events of a day in July 1941, the attribu-

10. The pettiness of this debate sank to a new nadir when the issue became not whether ethnic Poles participated in the Jedwabne massacre, but how many were actually killed; see *Financial Times,* (London) 7 July 2001.
11. See Ilya Prizel: *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Poland, Russia, Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
12. A notable exception to the anti-Semitic intellectual climate was Eliza Orzeszkowa.
13. See Harold B, Segel, ed., *Stranger in Our Midst: Images of the Jew in Polish Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).
14. See Monika Adamczyk-Grabowska, "Poles and Poland in I. B. Singer's Fiction," *Polin* 5 (1990): 288–302.

tion of the crime to Polish "society" is both unfair and overstated. Murderous violence by Europe's impoverished and backward peasantry is certainly not unique. Descriptions of the brutal behavior of the peasantry during the French Revolution, the Romanian peasant "revolt" in 1907, and the Russian Civil War all attest to this violent tendency. Nikos Kazantzakis's novel *Zorba the Greek* depicts the peasants of Crete in the same light. Peasant savagery, even without the blessing of those in position of authority is a recurring phenomenon in European history, and it is hard to imagine any European peasantry behaving much differently under similar circumstances. It should be noted that during the same period Polish and Ukrainian peasantries engaged in mutual "ethnic cleansings" that were no less brutal than the massacre in Jedwabne. The backward peasantry of northeastern Poland did not speak just for the Polish nation, but rather represented the state of mind prevalent among much of Europe's rural underclass. It is unfair to equate all Poles with the peasantry of the Lozma district of which Jedwabne is part. Gross's argument that the martyrs of Jedwabne were killed by [Polish] society is problematic on several scores. First, the murders were committed by individuals, and the direct guilt remains individual. Second, the backward peasantry of the eastern marshlands of Poland represents just that—backward peasants. At the end of the day, the horror of Jedwabne occurred under German occupation and jurisdiction.

Another specious accusation Gross directs at the Poles is that most Poles were passive bystanders when the Holocaust was occurring in their midst. Again, here the Poles were no different from the rest of Europe. In no European country would the Holocaust have been possible without the acquiescence and passive cooperation of the native population—it took extraordinary courage to shield Jews. Given the unassimilated (and hence visible) nature of any Polish Jews and the brutality with which the Germans were punishing Slavic righteous gentiles, it is unfair to demand the kind of self-sacrifice that few possess.[15]

15. The two countries where the native population successfully resisted the implementation of the Final Solution were Denmark and Bulgaria. However, neither case is analogous to Poland. Not only were the Danish and the Bulgarian Jewish communities tiny in comparison to Poland's, but, "Aryan" Denmark was treated as a privileged ter-

On the other hand, equally unfair is the argument presented by apologists for the Jedwabne pogrom, as well as the pogroms of Krakow in 1945 and Kielce 1946, which links the Jewry of Poland to communism and the communists of Jewish descent. First of all, prior to the Second World War, there were few Jewish communists. Jewish membership in the Polish communist party hovered around 5,000 out of a population of over 3 million Jews.[16] Not only were these 5,000, out of a total communist membership of 20,000, Jewish communists a tiny fringe of the Jewish community, but also, in fact, most Jews chose either religious or secular Zionist parties. Only that segment of the Jewish population that wished to assimilate chose leftist utopianism. In this vein the prominent Polish historian, Jerzy Jedlicki, observed that "The only groups to oppose such ideas [to banish the Jews from Poland] were the socialists and communists and the liberal fraction of the intelligentsia, which explains the inclinations of *assimilating* Jews to seek refuge and support in these circles that did not treat them with aggression and contempt."[17] Jakub Berman, Anatol Fejgin, Hilary Minc, and other communist henchmen of Jewish origin acted as individuals and not as representatives of the Jewish community. Berman and his lot saw communism not as a means to promote a Jewish agenda but, rather, as a means to escape their ancestral Judaism. Neither Stalin's murder of Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union, nor the anti-Semitic "doctors" trials, nor Stalin's planned forced deportation of Jews to Birobidjan (a move that would have resulted in the physical annihilation of Soviet Jewry)[18] did anything to lessen the enthusiasm for Stalin by Messers Berman, Fejgin, and their cabal. To link Judaism to the acts of individuals of Jewish descent who embraced Stalinism is no more valid than to link Polishness to the bestial brutality of Feliks Dzerzhinski, the

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ritory and hence the Nazis were willing to allow the Danes to export to Sweden their highly assimilated Jews. Bulgaria, was not an occupied country but rather an ally of Germany, hence the popular opposition to Jewish deportation did not entail the risk of execution as it did for the Poles.

16. See Roland Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism, Poland 1933–1939* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Press, 1994), 403.
17. Jerzy Jedlicki, "How to Deal with This," *Polytika,* 10 February 2001.
18. Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir P. Naumov, *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001).

founder of the Cheka, or to Andrei Vyshinsky, Stalin's grand inquisitor. Unfortunately the refrain that *Zydo-kommuna* was a Jewish conspiracy against Poland has been articulated, at times, by all three primates of independent Poland, Hlond, Wyszynski, and Glemp.

The key issue confronting Poland, Jedwabne not withstanding, is not Polish behavior during the Second World War, a time when Poles were not masters of their own fate and were often only one step behind the Jews on the path to extermination. The issue that the Poles and Poland must address is how Poland, which in premodern times set the world standard of tolerance and democracy, has descended in modern times to a level of blind nationalism that has alienated all minorities and, indeed, has turned them into the bitter foes of the Polish state. If Poland is to reclaim its premodern tradition and claim to be a modern democratic European polity, it must confront the bitter legacy of the Second Republic (1918–1939), during which, despite its claims to be a tolerant multinational state true to its Jagellonian heritage, degenerated into one of the most intolerant and chauvinist polities in Europe.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the historic roots of anti-Semitism in Poland, a brief outline is in order. Unfortunately the tragic confluence of political and cultural forces in the twentieth century eradicated the Jagellonian tradition. As early as 1751 the Catholic Church urged the Polish political elite, while avoiding direct physical assault on the Jews, to wage economic warfare on them and to physically separate the Jews from the gentile population as a means to solve the "Jewish Question" on Polish soil.[19] During the nineteenth century the Polish Catholic Church locked in a bitter *Kulturkampf* with Germany, paid little attention to the Jews; however, with the onset of the twentieth century, when the German cultural challenge was successfully defeated, the church refocused on the Jews and resorted to its eighteenth-century strategy. In fact, both Cardinal Hlond as well as Father Maximilian Kolbe, while opposing physical violence against the Jews, called for economic warfare as a strategy to solve the Jew-

19. See *A QUO PRIMUM* (On Jews and Christians Living in the Same Place) Encyclical of Pope Benedict XIV promulgated to the primate, archbishops, and bishops of the Kingdom of Poland, 14 June 1751.

ish question. The Polish aristocracy, which before the 1863 uprising had seen Jews as a useful commercial class acting as an intermediary between the landed gentry and the peasants, by the 1880s, when forced to examine its economic interests as an entrepreneurial class, started to perceive "the Jew" as a threat and competitor in commerce as well as a threat to their exalted status. Thus, anti-Semitism became a socially and politically acceptable philosophy.[20] By the late 1880s, across wide circles of the Polish intellectual elite it became the "accepted knowledge" that the Jewish presence in Poland was responsible for the nation's failure and humiliation.[21] Reflecting this state of mind, Jerzy Jedlicki observed that: "Shortly before the First World War, the struggle against the Jews became an obsession, garnering more coverage in the Warsaw press and stirring up more emotion than any other issue."[22] Many Polish intellectuals, influenced by the ethno-romantic notions of Johann Gottfied von Herder and the racist Darwinist ideologies of Joseph de Gobineau, Wilhelm Marr, and others, increasingly adopted the prevalent European view that the nations of Europe were on the verge of Darwinian war of the castes in which those who won would prosper while those who lost would perish. Polish intellectuals, much like many other European intellectuals in the early twentieth century, had become became what Julien Benda calls "high priests" of racist ethno-nationalism.[23]

The development of the gentile Polish middle class did not follow the Anglo-Saxon path of independent economic dynamism which led in due course to toleration of minorities and ultimately to pluralism as envisioned by Alan Ryan.[24] Instead Poland, like France, Italy, and Hungary, developed a state-dependent middle class whose economic power was based on exclusion rather than competition.[25] Given the socio-economic structure of the Second Republic, a confluence between primitive medieval religious anti-

20. See Brian A. Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press) 2000
21. See Theodore R. Weeks, "The 'international Jewish Conspiracy' reaches Poland: Teodor Jeske-Choinski and His Works," *East European Quarterly* 31: 1 (1997)
22. Jedlicki, "How to Dear With This."
23. See Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).
24. See Alan Ryan, *Property* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
25. See Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of Modern World* (Boston, Mass. Beacon Press, 1966).

Semitism and modern racial anti-Semitism, which emerged from the various layers of Polish society, left no space for Poland's large and unassimilated Jewish minority. Furthermore, unlike pre-first World War Romania or the early Horthy period in Hungary, where the political elite recognized the essential economic role of the Jews and kept populist anti-Semitism in check, the Polish elite saw the Jew as a threat to their power and status. For this reason, they chose a strategy closer to that of the tsarist regime in Russia, using violence against Jews as a means to channel the political frustration of the Polish rural masses, who remained frustrated by poverty, land hunger, and the continuing hegemony of the landed gentry. Thus, the history of the Second Republic is punctuated by elite-directed violence against the Jews.

It was not a "foreign hand" that was responsible for the violence against Ukraine's Jews perpetuated by Polish troops, particularly those of under the command of General Jozef Haller. If the pogrom at Jedwabne can be "explained" as a peasant outburst directed by Nazi operatives, the wave of pogroms across Poland in 1918 and the massacre of hundreds of Jews in Lwow in November 1918, orchestrated by the Polish high command and carried out by Polish troops cannot. The fact that it was also covered up by the Polish foreign ministry is, indeed, a Polish tragedy. In 1919, pogroms initiated by Polish troops spread to Pinńsk, Lida, and finally Wilno.[26] While both Ignace Paderewski and Jozef Pilsudski made philo-Semitic statements before independence at home and abroad, both luminaries remained silent during the bloody pogroms of 1918–1922. "Ghetto benches" to which Jewish students were relegated were instituted at the University of Lwow as early as 1923. The Universities of Poznan and Lublin barred Jews altogether.[27] While the impoverished and backward peasantry of Jedwabne does not speak for Poland, the nation's universities, cardinals, and intellectual elites do. Therefore, the tragedy that needs to be addressed is not the bloody massacre of July 1941, but the myopic policy of the elite of the Second Republic, a pol-

26. Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 40.
27. Harry Rabinowicz, *The Legacy of Polish Jewry 1919–1939* (New York: Yoselof Books, 1965), 100.

icy that caused much suffering to the Jews and much damage to Poland. Poland's cooperation with the Nazi persecution of the Jews was not initiated by a mob of peasants acting under German prodding, but rather by the independent actions of the Polish Ministry of the Interior when it denationalized the Jewish *citizens of Poland* residing in Nazi Germany, triggering a wave of brutal Nazi violence toward thousands of Polish Jews trapped in Germany.[28]

The practical result of the political climate of the Second Republic and the image of the Jewish minority perpetuated by Poland's religious and intellectual elites was twofold. In the most immediate sense hundreds of Jews died, and thousands were injured and dispossessed in violence perpetuated by the majority in the years 1918 through 1922, including the pogroms of Katowice (21 August 1922) and Siedlice (19 May 1922) as well as during the 1935–39 period. In the years 1935–37, 118 Polish Jews died as a result of pogroms.[29] In 1936 alone, hate violence in Poland resulted in the death of 56 Jews and injury to more than 1,000.[30] However, far more important was the psychological impact on the majority community. Raul Hilberg in describing the progression toward the physical extermination of the Jews argues that the Nazis and their cohorts went through three distinct phases in carrying out the extermination of the Jews of Europe. These steps consisted of expropriation, concentration, and extermination.[31] It is generally agreed that the most complex phase was the first phase, the isolation and dehumanization of the Jews, and that this step was paramount to the success of the next two phases. It is tragic that the intellectual mindset and the policies of the Second Republic were such that the Nazis could essentially dispense with this most difficult first step because it had already been accomplished for them. In fact, the demonization of the Jew was so effective that, as Jedlicki points out, even "the Holocaust failed to bring about a dramatic transformation of Polish attitudes."[32]

28. Jerzy Tomaszewski, "The Expulsion of Jewish-Polish Citizens from Germany October 28–29, 1938," *Acta Polonae Historica* 76 (1997): 97–122.
29. Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German occupation 1939–1944* (New York: Hippocrene Pres, 1996), 125.
30. Rabinowicz, *Legacy,* 56.
31. See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (3 vols.) (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1985).
32. Jedlicki, "How to Deal with This."

The purpose of this brief description on interethnic relations in the Second Republic is not to dwell on the Polish-Jewish issue, which is clearly not relevant to the present day since, for all practical purposes, there are no longer any Jews in Poland, and in that sense anti-Semitic outbursts in Poland have no practical meaning. However, as Zygmunt Bauman has observed, in contemporary Poland the term "Jew" is a catchall word that can be applied to anything disagreeable with no real reference to the Jewish ethnoreligious group as such.[33] The issue that Poland must now confront is how is it can avoid similar pitfalls as it progresses on the road toward European integration and, with that, toward inevitable multiculturalism.

Jürgen Habermas once observed that in the postmodern age, the prerequisite for the success of an enduring democracy is the separation of the *ethnos* and the *demos.* "Only briefly did the democratic nation state forge a close link between '*ethnos*' and '*demos*'."[34] The manner in which this link between "*ethnos*" and "*demos*" is addressed in Poland will depend heavily on the ability of Polish society to realize that the Polish Second Republic despite all its successes was a tragic failure as a multicultural society.

The collapse of communism has already shattered the myth of a purely mono-ethnic society. As Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska has noted the "discovery" of hundreds of thousands of Germans, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and other minorities within Poland is putting to the test the professed commitment of Polish society to the multicultural Jagellonian concept.[35] Violence over church properties with the Greek Catholic minority, disruptions at Ukrainian folk festivals, and bombastic homilies by Cardinal Glemp at Jasna Gora indicate that the transition from *ethnos* to *demos* will be long and arduous even under the current circumstances. However, a far more difficult dilemma will face Poland sometime in the middle of this decade when Poland will finally join the European Union (EU). Membership in the EU will mean that Poland

33. Zygmunt Bauman, *Nowoczesnosc Lzaglada* (Warsaw 1989), 85.
34. Jürgen Habermas, "Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe," *Praxis International* 12: 1 (1992); 4.
35. Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska, "The Most Serious Test," *Wiez,* April 2001.

will have to adapt to a true Babylon with mixtures of races, religions, and languages on an unprecedented scale. Poland, like all EU countries, will have to accept different racial groups as a permanent feature in its midst, and mosques, Buddhist temples, etc., as a ubiquitous presence in its cities. The question of whether Poland will enter the European Union as a postmodern state like the Netherlands, or as an amnesia-ridden defensive polity like Austria will depend very much on the ability and willingness of Polish society to revisit the Second Republic with all its accomplishments as well as its catastrophic failures. Since the collapse of communism, some Polish intellectuals have started to engage in a revision of the accepted image of the Second Republic, including its myopic attitudes toward the Ukrainians, Jews, and Germans. Thus far the work of these historians has not penetrated beyond the narrow circle of academics and intellectuals. Ten years after the collapse of communism, Poland's younger generation seems to be as poorly informed about its country's precommunist past[36] as is its Japanese counterpart about Japan's pre-1945 history. Let us hope that Gross's *Neighbors* will broaden the revision of Poland's twentieth-century history rather than refocus it on the abnormal times of the Second World War. Surely, a secure and self-confident Poland can afford to and will be willing to undertake this self-examination and help bring an end to the historic amnesia. Only by truly knowing all phases of its past will a postmodern Poland be able to reclaim the glory of its premodern legacy, relegating the dark period between 1863 and 1968 to the position of a tragic historic aberration, an aberration that darkens every nation's past.

36. See Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, "Attitudes of Young Poles Toward Jews in Post 1989 Poland," *East European Politics and Society* 14: 3 (Spring 2000): 565–596.