

Discussing Auschwitz, Scholarly Integrity and Governmental Revisionism: A Case Study in Academic Intimidation

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In September 2015, I became embroiled in a controversial and confrontational media discourse that rapidly assumed a global context as external actors engaged in a hateful campaign of intimidation and threatening behavior. It was initiated by a letter I had published in the *Belfast Telegraph*, which included a reference that localised anti-Semitism was a factor in the Nazi decision to locate the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp in Poland. It was a response to a letter thread that had included multiple mentions of Poland, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and hateful intimidation. However, a forensic examination of the letter suggests the confrontation had, in fact nothing to do with the Jewish tragedy of the Shoah and everything to do with the hateful intra-communal strife between the Catholic-nationalist and Protestant-loyalist communities of Northern Ireland that oftentimes cynically exploits external symbolism to further narrow parochial agendas.

My letter prompted an immediate intervention by the cultural attaché of the Polish Embassy in London, who took offense at my suggestion that historical anti-Semitism was a causal force in locating the six extermination camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Majdanek in German-occupied Poland. This defensive commentary completely missed the parochial context of the letter sequence; it did not recognise in any sense the subtle complexities of Northern Ireland religious and ideological hatred that had endured for many hundreds of years.

This response prompted an immediate and vitriolic reaction from the Polish global diaspora, which included hundreds of hateful and threatening e-mails, hundreds of online commentaries in the same hateful vein, and a considerable number of letters to my home threatening all kinds of vile repercussions for my slandering of the Polish nation and its people. This prompted the *Belfast Telegraph* to suspend the dialogue thread underneath my letter and prepare a three-part editorial rebuttal that, if read sequentially, gives a comprehensive overview of the levels of intimidation directed at me personally and the paper as an institution.²

In order to illustrate the fraught and stressful nature of this confrontation, this article will consist of two sections: Firstly, I will recount the contentious *Belfast Telegraph* debate, secondly, I will highlight the evidential package I put forward in order to defend myself. On reflection, this approach was perhaps a naïve expectation on my part. It quickly emerged

that every attempt at explanation was depicted as part of a twentieth-century Judeo Bolshevik plot to exploit Poland.³

The timbre of the refutation was almost medieval in language, sentiment, and vitriol; it was almost exclusively one that denied a past, or indeed present, Polish anti-Semitism. Perhaps this worldview is exemplified by Zbigniew Ziobro, Poland's Justice minister who in an August 2016, debate on potential legislation relating to how individuals referenced Nazi occupied Poland, stated that "it wasn't our mothers, nor our fathers, who are responsible for the Holocaust, which were committed by German and Nazi criminals."⁴ This position was the dominant theme as the Polish government, where the nationalistic ruling party Law and Justice has a majority, approved a new bill "that foresees prison terms of up to three years for anyone who uses phrases like 'Polish death camps' to refer to Auschwitz and other camps that Nazi Germany operated in occupied Poland."⁵

THE BELFAST TELEGRAPH: A CONFRONTATION WITH POLISH DENIAL

Over the late summer and early autumn of 2015, a public discourse that initially centered on the long established intra-communal hostility between Catholic-nationalist and Protestant-loyalist Northern Ireland slowly assumed a global significance. It expanded from an observation in the *Belfast Telegraph* by a nationalist member of the Northern Ireland Assembly (devolved parliament) who commented on the vocal objections of a loyalist protester to the flying of the Nazi swastika in July 2015, a conflict that will be further explained in this article.⁶

The timing of this contentious dialogue is a core aspect of contextualising the incendiary response mechanisms of the invested political and social actors; this is especially true for readers outside the hateful cauldron of Northern Ireland's distrustful century's old religious/ethnic conflict. Any theoretical framework for conflict in Northern Ireland has to incorporate at the very beginning the historical antipathy between Protestant Unionist and Catholic Nationalist citizens.

In the not so recent past this conflict has oftentimes been depicted in generalized religious terms of Protestant settler and indigenous Catholic conflict; however, for the purposes of this paper, it is more informative "to analyse it as a plural society, with one dominant and one subordinate ethnic group."⁷ This template imposes a power dynamic emphasizing how "many Protestants see Catholics as the Other, the eternal enemy, always a threat. . . . Their 'woes' are imaginary, invented by agitators and swallowed by people who cannot think for themselves."⁸ Therefore, the concept of a substantial "Other" within Northern Ireland is essential to understanding the intra-communal antipathy between dominant and subordinate group; it con-

textualizes the political, cultural, and social characteristics of the *Belfast Telegraph* debate.⁹

This intra-communal strife has endured, and in some respects deepened, since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement of April 1998, which notionally, at least, ended hostilities and brought the para-militaries of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Ulster Defense Association (UDA) to the negotiating table. However, it did not, indeed could not, end an ideological and religious hatred dating back to the 17th century.¹⁰ This would have been apparent to any student of modern Ireland who understood how ancient religious and ideological hatreds had become ever more entrenched since the partition of the six Ulster counties from the newly created Irish Free State in 1921.¹¹

From a loyalist perspective, the antipathy toward the nationalist community was grounded in the determination to secure the initially fragile link to Britain.¹² Over time, this was reinforced by the governing status of the new and almost universally Protestant political elite. This cohort legitimated “the state as the vehicle for the destiny of the dominant group” by excluding as different the minority Catholic community.¹³ In turn, this engendered a sense of alienation in the disenfranchised nationalist block, which consequently embraced the state building philosophy of their co-religionists in the newly independent Irish Free State.¹⁴ This, superficially at least, was grounded in the idea that to be Irish was to be Catholic and that anyone outside of this privileged position was somehow “less” than or the “other.”¹⁵

This fixed ideological worldview reinforced intra-communal identity along rigid religious and ethnic lines, which, in turn, defined access to basic structural supports. This unequal division of national wealth would inevitably precipitate a revolutionary mindset in the disenfranchised nationalist community, and it was only a matter of when and how this would ultimately manifest. Northern Ireland was not immune to the wave of social unrest that engulfed the globe in the 1960s, and the disenfranchised Catholic-nationalist demographic, like many discriminated groups, became increasingly organized as it sought a platform to air its grievances. This young and increasingly educated middle-class cohort took a lead from the Civil Rights movement in America, which had taken to the streets to demand an end to segregation for their black fellow citizens.¹⁶ They quickly learned how effective passive but vocal demonstrations by young white students could be and founded the Northern Ireland Civil Rights movement as a platform to demand equal access to education, housing, and health services for their less fortunate co-religionists.¹⁷

These demands were resisted with increasingly violent responses by the dominant loyalist ruling class; intra-communal confrontation became an

every-day factor of Northern Ireland existence.¹⁸ This reached an apex in 1969 when hatreds that had festered since partition nearly 50 years earlier erupted into openly violent confrontation; the so-called “Troubles” would last for 30 years and claim nearly 3,500 lives before the 1998 Good Friday peace settlement.¹⁹

Subsequently, each community elected representatives from their own tradition to the Northern Ireland Executive Assembly, each side steadfastly refusing to engage on a social and cultural basis, each side resolutely refusing to abandon the visible manifestation of allegiance to the British Crown or the Irish Republic.²⁰ As each community sought to maintain an overt identification with its political, cultural, and social genesis within the ramifications of peace, the manifestations of hate became a core tenet of this new relationship: the flying of the British Union flag and the Irish Republic’s Tricolour, the right to inflammatory marches by the Orange Order in nationalist enclaves, and the annual commemoration for the murdered civilians of 1972’s Bloody Sunday, in which British soldiers opened fire on Irish protestors, killing 14, all inflamed an already outraged and deeply held tribal allegiance.²¹

In the context of the intense religious and ideological hatreds that defined Northern Ireland, these parochial acts of symbolic identification were understandable. What is not as easily explained is the appropriation of the Israeli-Palestine conflict by loyalists and nationalists as a means of continuing hostilities in a proxy war.²² This became clear in the immediate aftermath of the Camp David summit failure in 2000 as hostilities between Israeli and Palestinian residents of Gaza became ever more confrontational in the early years of the new millennium. Parts of Belfast began to assume a Middle Eastern air as the Star of David began to fly in the loyalist heartland, while slogans proclaiming “we support the suicide bombers” and “victory to Jenin” began to appear in republican strongholds.²³



Mural on the Falls Road, Belfast, a republican stronghold. Photograph by Niall Carson via Press Association Images, thejournal.ie, www.thejournal.ie/Belfast-mural-links-hamas-with-dissident-republicans-1604313-Aug2014/



Israeli Flags flying in Cluan Place, Belfast, a loyalist stronghold. Photography by Niall Carson via Press Association Images, www.thejournal.ie/Belfast-mural-links-hamas-with-dissident-republicans-1604313-Aug2014/

If this seems inexplicable from an external perspective, it was nevertheless a reality in the intra-communal and polarized daily existence of contemporary nationalist and loyalist Belfast. It is partially at least explained by the simplistic ideological framing of the Middle Eastern tragedy; oftentimes this is conducted by actors who appropriate external conflict to justify parochial conflict strategies. They may adopt strategies to raise their international profile and increase chances of gaining support. Those groups best able to “pitch” themselves to an international audience and “match” their grievances to recognized abuses—often by framing localized conflicts, parochial demands and particularistic identities—are most likely to arouse transnational activism. The “pitch” takes two main forms: direct lobbying of potential supporters and indirect promotion through media coverage.²⁴

This approach by loyalist and nationalist actors has achieved a degree of success; Ithamar Handelman Smith captures the vociferous - albeit not surprising - views of Northern Ireland’s Protestants and Catholics with respect to the situation of Palestinians in Israel in the thought-provoking documentary *Shalom Belfast*.²⁵ This shows how individuals who oftentimes have never left Belfast become ideological adherents to a mythical Zionist vision of Israel (which is totally unrecognizable to Israelis) or a mythical vision of heroic Palestinian freedom fighters (which is the antithesis of the oftentimes grubby daily existence of Gazans).

The parochial nature of this simplistic narrative was clear for those who understand the micro-forces that underpin loyalist-nationalist discourse. However, an appreciation of these subtleties was completely absent in a letter by John Dallat, the Socialist Democratic Liberal Party (SDLP) member for East Derry that appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* in July 2015. Dallat opened “Loyalists Guilty of Contradiction over Flag Flying” by opining that:

I am impressed by the anger of loyalists in Carrickfergus following the appearance of Nazi flags in the town and I am sure anyone who has been to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland (or, indeed, to any of the other death camps run by the Nazis) will be full-square behind the Carrickfergus loyalist who stood in front of the cameras to make his views known.²⁶

Dallat then went to the heart of his thesis, a harsh critique of how some loyalist factions do not hesitate to celebrate nationalist deaths during the ‘Troubles.’

However, while making no comparisons on scale and the extent of the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis, I found it a little odd to see loyalist paramilitary flags fluttering in the background while the condemnations

were being made. Am I to understand that people outraged with flags linked with the atrocities carried out by Nazis have no problem living with flags commemorating people like the Shankill Butchers [a particularly brutal loyalist gang operating in the 1970s and early 1980s]? The reality is that we still live in a very confused society and it worries me that the duplicity shown by those in Carrickfergus and replicated in other areas doesn't auger well for the future. The very fact that some people thought it a good idea to put Nazi flags up in Carrickfergus in the first place tells me that there are still some very dangerous people in our midst who think Nazism was a good idea.²⁷

This type of polarized intra-communal criticism is not unusual in Northern Ireland, especially at the height of the marching season (April through August); however, in an extraordinary and misplaced display of national outrage, Kaja Kazmierska, the press attaché at the Polish embassy in London, responded to Dallat's opening paragraph naming Poland as the location for Auschwitz-Birkenau.

I would like to draw your attention to the phrase "Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp in Poland," used in the first paragraph of the letter. Such a phrase is inaccurate as during the Second World War, Poland was occupied by Nazi Germany and the USSR. Consequently, the concentration camp you are referring to was not "in Poland" but rather on the German-occupied Polish territories. I hope that you would agree with me that it is an important distinction, as without making it, one runs the risk of distorting the historical truth about some of the most horrific crimes perpetrated in the 20th century. The following phrasing: "Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp in Nazi German-occupied Poland" might be a worthwhile alternative.²⁸

Fully cognizant of the parochial sub-text of Dallat's letter, I responded to this rather strange intervention by offering an alternative opinion, including an argument that Polish anti-Semitism, not only German occupation, was also a factor in the location of Auschwitz-Birkenau. My letter was titled "Auschwitz Location," which the *Belfast Telegraph* published under the banner "Poles Cannot Deny Role in Auschwitz," which as events transpired, would prove to be an unfortunate editorial decision that would merely inflame an already contentious dialogue. I wrote:

Kaja Kazmierska is technically correct when stating that "Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp [was] in Nazi German-occupied Poland," and not under the control of a sovereign Polish government. However, the reason for this is a straightforward one; the Nazis knew that Poland, with its deeply entrenched political, cultural and social acceptance of anti-Semitism, was arguably the only place under its control that would accept an extermination centre of such barbaric proportions.²⁹

My argument was intended to point out the historical reality that, to a degree, anti-Semitism, as well as spatial and demographic factors, had played a part in the Nazi decision to locate Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, a historical reality long acknowledged by Holocaust scholars.³⁰ To reinforce this point, I pointed to the horrendous anti-Semitic worldview that pervaded post-war Poland. This prejudicial religious discrimination would have devastating consequences for the pitifully few Jews still left in Poland, when, just 16 months after the liberation of Auschwitz,

an enraged Polish community in Kielce. . . initiated a pogrom of brutal proportions. In the full knowledge of what had happened to more than 1,000,000 Jews in nearby Auschwitz, in the full knowledge that a Polish community of 3,500,000 Jews had disappeared from their midst, this small town murdered nearly 50 Holocaust survivors.³¹

I finished my letter with what must be admitted was a rather strong rebuttal of Kazmierska's demand for "historical truth:"

This innate anti-Semitic worldview was why the Nazis located extermination centres in Poland, that is "the historical truth," and although this might be unpalatable for modern day Poles to hear, it cannot, nor should not be denied.³²

At this point, it has become clear that my use of the term "innate anti-Semitic worldview" is highly problematic from a scholarly perspective. For after all, if pre-war Polish anti-Semitism had indeed been innate, this whole debate would never have arisen as anti-Semitism would have been a universally accepted precursor to the Nazi decision to locate Auschwitz in occupied-Poland. The problem is, of course, once a phrase enters the public domain, it cannot be removed. Therefore, the only course of action open to me is an explanation of the casual use of such a term. It was made in the heat of a dialogue that I never for one moment imagined would reach an academic level and consequently, the level of oversight that I normally apply to my writing was clearly missing. What it has reinforced at a personal level, is that no matter the individual level of experience, it is imperative that one remembers how important terminology is, even more so in a non-academic environment. As this paper proves, an imprudent and/or thoughtless comment can be the flame that ignites an incendiary dialogue if incorrectly applied

Having said that, it is important to also state that my argument was not made maliciously but after years of intensive research into aspects of pre-war Polish anti-Semitism for my biography of Robert Briscoe, an Irish-Jewish politician who became a leading member of the New Zionist Organ-

isation (Revisionists) and led a 1939 rescue mission to Warsaw on behalf of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the revisionist leader.³³ Therefore, even though my phrase was a throwaway comment in a provincial newspaper, it was grounded in an empirical appraisal of the political, social, and cultural forces underpinning pre-war Polish anti-Semitism. This research subsequently prompted a macro analysis of Polish attitudes towards its Jewish citizens pre- and post-war; a major part of this focused on the enlightened writings of some members of the Polish intelligentsia who reflected on their nation's wartime shortcomings. For example, Jerzy Andrzejewski opined in his 1946 essay in *Odrodzenie* that

I wish I could honestly say [that] yes, anti-Semitism in Poland is disappearing. . . . Unfortunately, after many years of thinking about this matter as an open, infected wound festering within our organism, witnessing all that happened in Poland before and during the war, and what is taking place at present; listening to people from various milieus and of different levels of intelligence, noticing their often unconscious gestures and reactions, observing how certain gestures and reactions automatically follow, I am not able to conclude, I cannot conclude, anything else but that the Polish nation in all its strata and across all intellectual levels, from the highest all the way down to the lowest, was and remains after the war anti-Semitic.³⁴

Armed with my research, I really did not give much thought to the possible repercussions to my statement in the *Belfast Telegraph*; isolated in my academic bubble of scholarship I presumed, erroneously as it immediately transpired, that anyone engaging in this debate would also share the same objectivity I had applied in my response to Kazmierska. However, I was instantaneously disabused of this naïve expectation by the torrent of personal invective and ridicule directed at myself and the *Belfast Telegraph*. Even at this remove, and having approached the subsequent events from an academic perspective by imposing a theoretical framework on subsequent events, I still find myself at a loss in terms of how to describe the crescendo of hatred that descended on my head over the next fortnight.

The response was immediate as I realized when I opened my e-mail on the morning of September 17th and found my inbox filled with the vilest type of invective and threat from an outraged global Polish community. Most of what was said is unprintable; some of the more printable examples included “Jew-loving commie bastard”; “you are a Catholic traitor who will burn in hell”; and “you must be a yid convert to betray Catholic Poland in such a way.” It emerged that my profile on the Irish Professional Historians website had been used to gain personal information. that had been passed around the globe to Polish web activists who then proceeded to launch a

virulent campaign of denigration against me. I immediately had to shut it down; consequently, all my publication information and conference addresses were denied to colleagues and friends.

The campaign included thousands of blog posts; the setting up of Facebook pages,³⁵ and, to my knowledge, at least one radio station devoted a segment to my letter.³⁶ Over the following days, these were accompanied by more than 20 postal letters from diverse locations around the globe including the U.S., Canada, South Africa, and Australia. The common theme in these was *we know where you live, and you deserve what is coming to you*; the threats expanded to include a sinister targeting of the Jewish Museum in Dublin, based solely on the fact I had previously lectured there.

The threats and hateful commentary was not simply confined to a personal level; the *Belfast Telegraph* was targeted at both a macro level with the Polish ambassador in London demanding a public retraction of my contribution to the debate, and a micro level, with the comments link underneath my letter flooded with hundreds of outraged statements. These denigrated the paper for supposedly fostering an anti-Polish narrative and included a complaint to the Independent Press Standards Organisation (PSO) from a reader living in Dublin, who argued I had no empirical basis for my argument. This was despite the fact that I had initially tried to engage in the commentary section of the paper by posting copious research material on pre-war Polish anti-Semitism.

This complaint was immediately dismissed by the PSO; however, despite the *Belfast Telegraph* winning a decisive victory for free speech, it became clear that this was not going to easily accepted by the Polish embassy in London. On October 6th, the ambassador, Witold Sobkow, made his displeasure public by sending the following letter to the paper:

[I]t would seem that the Belfast Telegraph is trying to put itself into the role of sole advocate for freedom of speech. I reiterate that it was not my intention to demand only “inoffensive” opinions be published. I do, however, stand up for accuracy and historical truth. If one publishes information which is not true, one must not simply invoke freedom of speech in its defence. If the Belfast Telegraph is an eager defender of freedom of speech, why does it fail to allow the other side to express their views in response to Dr. McCarthy’s letter?³⁷

The universal response (as evidenced by the ambassador’s commentary on my inclusion of the Kielce pogrom as a context to illustrate Polish anti-Semitism) was either an outraged denial that it had ever happened or that it had been carried out by Polish communists at the behest of orders from Moscow.³⁸ Outrageous anti-Semitic polemics from Wikipedia formed the basis for this irrational and defensive response.³⁹

This reached incendiary levels when I attempted to broaden the narrative by including Jan T. Gross' *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, an account of the massacre in the north-east Polish town as an example of a wartime pogrom. Gross recounted the July 1941 experience of the Jewish citizens of Jedwabne, who were clubbed, drowned, gutted, and burned not by faceless Nazis, but by people whose features and names they knew well: their former schoolmates and those that sold them food, bought their milk, and chatted with them in the street.

In order to accurately retell this horrific story, Gross rigorously researched the archives, oral history, and diaries of the time. It is a harrowing read that draws you into the terror of the Jewish citizens of Jedwabne, who feared the worst from the Nazi invasion but were eventually slaughtered by their fellow Poles. Gross immediately and viscerally sets the scene by citing the following testimony from control-investigative files from the Lomza Security Office; it was given at the trial of 22 individuals who were being prosecuted for their participation in the 1941 pogrom.

Before the war broke out, 1,600 Jews lived in Jedwabne, and only seven survived, saved by a Polish woman, Wyrzyk Owska, who lived in the vicinity. On Monday evening, June 23, 1941, Germans entered the town. And as early as the 25th local bandits, from the Polish population, started an anti-Jewish pogrom. Two of those bandits, Borowski (Borowiuk?) Wacek with his brother Mieek, walked from one Jewish dwelling to another together with other bandits playing accordion and flute to drown the screams of Jewish women and children. I saw with my own eyes how these murderers killed Chajcia Wasersztajn, Jakub Kac, seventy-three years old, and Elias Krawiecki. Jakub Kac they stoned to death with bricks. Krawiecki they knifed and then plucked his eyes and cut off his tongue. He suffered terribly for twelve hours before he gave up his soul. On the same day I observed a horrible scene. Chaja Kubrzańska, twenty-eight years old, and Basia Binsztajn, twenty-six years old, both holding newborn babies, when they saw what was going on, they ran to a pond, in order to drown themselves with their children rather than fall into the hands of the bandits. They put their children in the water and drowned them with their own hands: then Baška Binsztajn jumped in and immediately went to the bottom, while Chaja Kunrzańska suffered for a couple of hours. Assembled hooligans made a spectacle of this. They advised her to lie face down in the water, so that she would drown faster. Finally, seeing that the children were already dead, she threw herself more energetically into the water and found her death too. The next day a local priest intervened, explaining that they should stop the pogrom, and the German authorities would take care of things by themselves.⁴⁰

When Gross published this vital research, it was not received as a

cathartic cleansing of an unsavory past; instead it was met with a virulent denial by a deeply shocked Polish society, where it was politically rejected and socially denigrated. Gross' work was immediately challenged as the work of an amateur historian whose methodology and sources were either suspect or invalid despite the fact he is an eminent Princeton academic.

This attempt to denigrate Gross' thesis has not diminished in the ensuing 15 years since the publication of *Neighbors*. Elements of the Polish establishment still cannot/will not accept the historical validity of his research.⁴¹ This is borne out by the recent publication of *The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne* by Anna Bikont.⁴² In this excellent work, Bikont rigorously analyzed the national resistance to Gross' work of 2001; she insightfully highlighted the collaborative process between historians and politicians to denigrate Gross and undermine his research. For her troubles, she also received numerous threats. In an insightful review of Bikont's exposé, Lawrence Douglas, professor of law at Amherst College, highlighted a few examples that included accusations that Bikont was infected with a "crazy anti-Polonism" and warnings that she would face "an imminent kamikaze attack."⁴³ In a broader framework, Douglas perfectly summarizes the contemporary context of denial by suggesting "that anti-Semitism is more than capable of flourishing in the absence of Jews," an argument reinforced by the fact that "of a pre-war Jewish population that once totaled more than 3.3 million, Poland now has no more than 11,000 Jews."⁴⁴

In this context, Bikont's work perfectly illustrated how the process of denial implemented by post-communist nationalist politicians has cast a generation of Poles adrift from their nation's past. In many respects, this is the true tragedy for contemporary Poland, as the fact that their national narrative is one of genuine tragedy and victimhood is denigrated by an inability to holistically acknowledge the past. Indeed one could argue that this type of contemporary denial actually denigrates the hundreds of thousands of wonderfully brave Polish citizens who risked everything to save their Jewish neighbors. For after all, how can one acknowledge this heroism if the act itself is isolated from the reality that many of their fellow citizens availed of the opportunity to implement a centuries-old hatred toward Poland's 3,500,000 Jews?

There are however, brave voices in Poland's historical community who are ready to acknowledge the past; for example, in a 2001 colloquium to test Gross's thesis, Professor Jerzy Jedlicki made the following profound admission:

Hatred towards Jews, contempt and mockery of Jews, are part of twentieth-century Central European culture, and that includes Poland. By that I

don't meant to say that everybody would have been prepared to commit atrocities. But the destruction of the Jews was watched with amusement by a significant part of the local Polish population. That amusement, the laughter that accompanied the Holocaust—I remember it, because at that time I was on the other Aryan side of the wall. Until today, our stance, and I include myself in this, has been a flight from the subject, a cowardly fear of the darkness lurking in our collective history.⁴⁵

Not all contemporary Poles agree, as evidenced by the aggressive response of the Polish embassy to my letter in the *Belfast Telegraph*. That response should be understood in the context of events in Poland since the contentious re-election of Jarosław Kaczyński, now the leader of the ultra-conservative Law and Justice Party, as part of a ruling coalition in October, 2015. His election contextualizes the aggressive reaction to my letter in the *Belfast Telegraph* by locating it against the backdrop of the Polish election campaign that included a number of demonstrations with an overt anti-Semitic content.

This included a massive demonstration in Warsaw where far-right activists carried banners accusing its political opponents of defending “Jewish communist wealth.”⁴⁶ Simultaneously in Wrocław, supporters of Kaczyński’s Law and Justice Party proclaimed with sinister reference to the Second Republic nationalists of the 1930s, that “Wrocław is being de-Polonized as the Jews are buying up homes in the city.”⁴⁷ As far as I am aware, the Law and Justice party, known also by its Polish acronym, PIS, has failed to denounce any of these acts which contain anti-Jewish invective.

This campaign reached its apex in February 2016, when the Law and Justice government under the control of Kaczynski moved to strip Jan Gross of his 1996 awarded Order of Merit of the Polish Republic for wartime scholarship.⁴⁸ It is clear even 15 years after the publication of *Neighbors* that Gross is a target of Poland’s ultra-nationalist Law and Justice governmental as it attempts a revisionist expunging of even the merest suggestion of Polish complicity in the Holocaust. This accusation prompted scholars around the globe to come to Gross’ defense: recently, more than 30 academics have signed two open letters in the Polish press challenging the Law and Justice revisionist narrative. The first letter included the following statement from Professor Jan Grabowski, of the University of Ottawa, who forcefully described Gross as “a patriot who looks at both darker and lighter periods in Polish history.”⁴⁹

Despite this stout defense, Gross is aware his attempted to engage his countrymen about a troubling and indeed, forgotten aspect of wartime Poland, has failed. He described a societal rejection of past horrors as “a

confrontation with ghosts in the consciousness of Polish society” in an interview with MA students in the Holocaust Studies program at the University of Haifa on January 10, 2016.⁵⁰ As the vitriolic reaction to his valiant attempt at tweaking the conscience of Poland increased in intensity, it is clear that his fellow citizens were not either ready or willing to listen in 2001 or 2016.

PRE-WAR POLISH ANTI-SEMITISM AND A CONTEMPORARY FOUNDATIONAL MYTH

As the confrontation in the *Belfast Telegraph* reached an apex against the backdrop of a divisive internal Polish election campaign, I attempted to refute the challenge to my academic credibility by assembling a research package illuminating the extent of pre-war Polish anti-Semitism. Subsequently, I posted this material in the commentary thread under my original letter—unfortunately, to no avail, as my scholarly credentials continued to be vilified regardless of whatever empirical evidence I posted to support my argument. I then realized that this campaign had far exceeded, in political and social terms, the mere posting of a response in a provincial letters page; it had arguably become part of an official, government sanctioned strategy attacking any counter-narrative that challenged contemporary Poland’s foundational mythology. In turn, this prompted the scholar in me to examine contemporary Polish attitudes toward any individual or group outside of the narrow definition of a Catholic-nationalist definition of citizenship. I felt the need to understand the vitriolic response of denial to my initial argument about the existence of anti-Semitism before I could subjectively address the hateful, xenophobic response to a relatively benign academic challenge.

In constructing a theoretical framework of contemporary Polish denial of a racist, xenophobic, and/or anti-Semitic past, I drew upon an article in the *Sunday Times* (UK edition) by Sir Ian Kershaw, the preeminent British Holocaust scholar, who offers a historical context for the contemporary resistance of post-communist Eastern European states to the admittance of Syrian-Muslim refugees. Kershaw argues that nearly five decades of Soviet dominance contextualised “the fact that they haven’t had a lengthy period of socialization in anti-racist, anti-xenophobic values” and has led to an exclusionist worldview.⁵¹

Although Kershaw is not specifically referring to Poland, the manifestation of this insularity appeared in immediate aftermath of that nation’s independence. Poland’s new political regime was at once resistant to inward migration, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa who had since the mid-eighties used Poland as a transit to gain access to the Scandinavian states.

This reached an apex in early 1990, when Sweden “expelled nearly 1,000 asylum seekers of African and Arab origin back to Poland.”⁵² In turn, this act prompted an immediate transference of migration responsibility from “from [a] humanitarian agency (labor ministry) to a structure within [a] security agency (minister of the interior)” under the control of Lieutenant-Colonel Zbigniew Skoczylas, a career military officer. Although particularly focused on potential non-white migration, Polish policy also refused requests from ethnic Poles in the former Soviet states to return to the “motherland,” so great was the fear of economic collapse.⁵³

In order to understand Kershaw’s argument, the political, cultural, and social context of post-communist Poland needs to be considered, beginning with the absolute political imperative of creating a new state reflecting pre-war Polish thought and philosophy. This necessitated the construction of a foundational narrative by the main political actors that assumed power in the Third Republic (1989-present). It was grounded in the resurrection of core historical values of “the nation, the fatherland, patriotism, sovereignty and patriotic duty,” writes Owa Ochman. In the new nation, “these values were seen as rooted in Polish history, universally recognised by Poles and endorsed by national consensus,” and importantly, “Polish self-identification through Catholic symbols and rituals (the Pole-Catholic model) was regarded to be a persistent and dominant phenomenon in the national culture.”⁵⁴

This identification with a heroic past was reinforced over subsequent decades until reaching an apex with the 2005 election of the Kaczyński brothers, Lech Kaczyński as President of Poland until his death in 2010 and Jarosław Kaczyński, who initially as Prime Minister (2006-2007) before assuming leadership of the Law and Justice party in 2015. A core tenet of the Kaczyński template was the definition of modern-day Poland as the manifestation of a tragic past of victimhood.

This was legitimized “on a narrative focused on freedom fighting, victimhood and heroic martyrdom [epitomized by] the Second World War and the Warsaw Uprising.”⁵⁵ This worldview of heroic victimhood was perhaps best exemplified by the reaction of Lech Walesa, the Solidarity hero and former Polish president, to Gross’ exposé of the Jedwabne pogrom. As Lawrence Douglas previously mentioned, Walesa angrily denounced Gross’ work by exclaiming “the Poles have already apologised many times to the Jews: we are waiting for the apology from the other side because many Jews were scoundrels.”⁵⁶ This attitude of expectant apology by Walesa was not a dominant feature of Polish criticism of my letter in the *Belfast Telegraph*; in the main, the response emphasized Walesa’s narrative of “heroic victimhood” by citing the Warsaw Uprising by Polish nationalists while

either completely ignoring or denigrating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising by the Jewish resistance fighters.

The stylized and selective use of a specific historical event central to the foundational myth of post-communist Poland immediately emphasized that the politics of memory are an essential component in controlling a national narrative about the past. This places the pre-war “Jewish Question” at the center of contemporary Poland’s constructed political and social memory of the communist post-war regime.⁵⁷ The construction of a contemporary foundational myth was predicated on the careful manipulation of temporal and multiple public memories of Poland’s 3,500,000 strong Jewish community.

Essentially morality and justice were sidelined as a benign memory of pre-war Poland was instilled through a society unused to freedom of expression. This, of course, created internal tensions between individuals of conscience like Gross and Bikont and the nationalist myth of post-communist Poland. This is not uncommon in new nation-states that have been the victim of oppression, where an inevitable consequence of emphasizing a “heroic past” is the obliteration of negative historical national characteristics.⁵⁸ In Poland’s case, this is evidently the eradication of a centuries-old anti-Semitic ethos that, in ultra-Catholic states “was often regarded as a manifestation of national pride and religious devotion.”⁵⁹

This was especially so in post-World War 1 Poland, a successor state that had been reconstituted from the remnants of the failed Austria-Hungarian and Russian empires. The establishment of Poland as a sovereign state was accompanied “by the jarring music of pogroms against Jews, especially in places of mixed population, where the loyalties were deemed by Poles to be suspect.”⁶⁰ This was reflected in the actions of Polish troops in November 1918 in Lvi—now a part of the Ukraine but at that time about to become an integral part of a newly reconstituted Poland. The troops “embarked on a rampage through the Jewish quarter, looting, beating and even killing some of its inhabitants (estimates range from 50 to 72)”; the justification for this atrocity was the Catholic dogma insisting on the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy.⁶¹

A wave of pogroms quickly followed the Lviv one; over the next two years, these were driven by a nationalist belief that Jews on Polish soil were at best “tolerated guests” determined to undermine Polish sovereignty. This hatred toward citizens of a centuries-old Jewish community culminated in the city of Pinsk on April 5, 1919, where Polish troops murdered 35 Jews who had gathered together to share gifts sent to them by relatives in the United States. In a reflection of today’s denial of an anti-Semitic history: The authorities tried to hush up the incident, but the wave of rioting and pogroms had a severe repercussion abroad. The Poles

attempted to shirk all responsibility and cynically claimed that the reports of rioting and pogroms were merely sick propaganda intended to destroy the image of the Poles in world public opinion. The Poles were especially irritated by the use of the term *pogrom*.⁶²

The presence of such a visibly alien cohort led to a nationalist rejection of Jews by individuals like Roman Dmowski, leader of the National Democratic Party, which “maintained [Poland should be] a unitary national state in which all minorities [but especially the Jews] were either polonized or forced to emigrate.”⁶³ This belief system dominated inter-war Polish attitudes toward its Jewish citizens. Writing in 1924, Dmowski rationalised this view thus:

It is known to all that in the nineteenth century the main aim of the Jews was entrance into European societies, acquisition of European culture and knowledge, adoption of customs and ways of life of the nations among which they lived, transformations of themselves into Frenchmen, Englishmen, Germans, Poles and so forth. . . . Jews amassed great wealth and acquired a significant role in the in the social and political life of countries. In addition, the amassing of wealth quickly increased their role as a result of the material dependence on them by wide circles of European societies. . . . To these were added secret international organizations, in which Jews always had their defenders and in which, at a certain time, according to all data, they held executive positions. This was facilitated by the fact that they did not really belong to any nation and lived among all of them, they were created, as if by design, for the main role in all international undertakings.⁶⁴

The nationalist project of anti-Semitism was executed by structural anti-Semitism. For example, in August 1936, the Polish Ministry of Commerce ordered that all shops had to have a sign on the front giving the store owner’s exact birth certificate name, thereby clearly identifying those of Jewish ownership,⁶⁵ and leading to increased attacks on Jewish-owned businesses. This bill was just one of the expressions of intensifying anti-Semitic feeling in Poland, from 1936-1939. The impact of this development was to influence the adoption of measures by Polish professional organizations that excluded Jews, including the Polish Medical Association, the Polish Bar Association, the General Assembly of Journalists in Wilno, and the Bank Polski, the nation’s largest financial institution.⁶⁶

The political, cultural, and societal ramifications for Poland’s Jews during this time were life-and history-altering. Writing from Budapest in 1937, the Hungarian-Jewish scholar Desider Kiss noted that the large Jewish population of Poland—ten per cent of its people—both allowed Polish Jews to turn to the orthodoxy of the Middle Ages and, on the other hand, to

follow dreams of Zionism in mass emigration to Palestine. Indeed half of the Jewish newcomers to Palestine were from Poland, both drawn to Palestine and fleeing persecution in Poland.⁶⁷

In sum, the Jews of interwar Poland were frequently victims of state-sanctioned as well as everyday, casual anti-Semitism, a fact that did not go unnoticed in an interwar Irish Free State, which itself had a 5,000 strong Jewish community. As previously mentioned, my understanding of Polish pre-war anti-Semitism came from extensive research into the life of the Irish-Jewish politician, Robert Briscoe, who led a Revisionist Zionist rescue mission to Poland in December 1938.

This research also revealed how Briscoe worked in tandem with Isaac Herzog, Ireland's first Chief Rabbi, who in the fullness of time would also assume this position in first the British controlled Palestine Mandate and then in an independent Israel.⁶⁸ Herzog, who was a personal friend of Irish Táoiseach (prime minister) Éamon de Valera, poignantly described Polish Jews' situation in a 1936 speech on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), the most solemn day in the Jewish liturgical calendar:

When one reviewed the present state of affairs in so far as they affected the Jewish people, gloom in its very widest sense stared them in the face. . . . In Poland the plight of three and a half million of Jews [sic] was appalling in the extreme. . . they were made to suffer from the poisonous darts of Jew-hatred and Jew-baiting. In Germany the Jewish position was going from bad to worse and systematic efforts were increasingly made to make existence impossible for the 500,000 Jews still remaining there. . . . Alas! the plague of Jew-hatred, the most wicked and at the same time the most senseless phenomenon in this age of enlightenment was spreading.⁶⁹

The relationship between Herzog and Briscoe coalesced on the issue of the Nazi persecution of Germany's Jewish citizens; both men fervently believed that a mass exodus to the British controlled Palestine Mandate was the only option if a remnant of European Jewry was to survive. This belief became a core tenet of Briscoe's Jewish worldview in the mid to late 1930s after his failed inward Jewish migration endeavor to the Irish state.⁷⁰ This failure confirmed his adherence to the Zionist ideal of a Jewish National Homeland in Palestine, and, as previously mentioned, this belief had inexorably led him to becoming a senior member of the revisionists under the leadership of Jabotinsky by the autumn of 1938.⁷¹

Briscoe's commitment to the Revisionist ideal was reinforced as the tragic consequences of the failed Evian Conference on Refugees became apparent.⁷² Roosevelt had initiated a global conference of the refugee crisis after the Anschluss (Nazi annexation of Austria in March 1938). He asked

the invited nations “to consider what immediate steps [could] be taken, within the existing immigration laws. . . to assist the most urgent cases.”⁷³ The conference took place in Evian-les-Baines in France, Roosevelt’s personal envoy Myron Taylor giving an opening address on July 6th, which finally seemed to acknowledge “that discrimination and pressure against minority groups and the disregard of elementary human rights were contrary to the principles of civilization.”⁷⁴

This was an admirable sentiment; however, almost immediately a universal rejection of open immigration emerged as the British representative Lord Winterton echoed the parochial concerns of Germany’s nearest neighbors. In a statement that almost identically reflected the Irish position, he said his “Government were stretching their policy as far as they could in view of. . . their own problem of unemployment.”⁷⁵ He then repeated the immigration principle that Briscoe had heard so often in his many representations to the Department and Industry and Commerce: that only “refugees [who] could make a useful contribution to industrial life” would be considered.⁷⁶ Sir Neil Malcolm, the League of Nations High Commissioner for German Refugees, reinforced this position by doubting

the possibility, at least for some time to come, of any large scale immigrations and settlements because of the present conditions of the labor markets in nearly all the countries in the world. Furthermore, he thought, any large movement of Jews might result in an increase of anti-semitism in quarters where the sentiment is now negligible.⁷⁷

The majoritarian response was acknowledged in clause three of the conference’s concluding recommendations:

[T]he involuntary emigration of people in large numbers has become so great that it renders racial and religious problems more acute, increases international unrest, and may seriously hinder the processes of appeasement in international relations.⁷⁸

The consequences were devastating; Hitler immediately increased the levels of Jewish persecution, secure in the knowledge that the West was not going to intervene. He had prefaced the conference with the acerbic comment that

I can only hope, and expect that the other world, which has such deep sympathy for these criminals, will at last be generous enough to convert that sympathy into practical aid. We on our part, are ready to put all these criminals at the disposal of these countries, for all I care, even on luxury ships.⁷⁹

When the conference closed, it was clear in the final resolutions that the participating nations were not willing to receive Hitler's "criminals." This had emboldened the Nazis, and a series of increasingly vicious assaults eventually culminated in a brutal pogrom on the 9th and 10th of November 1938.⁸⁰ The Nazis used the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, a middle-ranking official at the German Embassy in Paris, by a disaffected young Polish Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, to bring the simmering assault on Germany's Jews to a vicious climax.⁸¹ This terrible event has become universally known by its German name of *Kristallnacht*, or night of the broken glass, and its brutality toward Jews reinforced to the global diaspora that Hitler was intent on entirely expelling their co-religionists from its ranks.⁸²

Less than a month after *Kristallnacht*, Briscoe (with de Valera's full support) accepted Jabotinsky's request to lead a mission to Warsaw in order to effect a long-standing plan to secure a mass emigration of Poland's Jews.⁸³ The Revisionists had been engaged in the endeavor to move Polish Jews to Palestine since 1937, oftentimes in cooperation with the Polish Government.⁸⁴ This cooperation might initially seem strange; however, as a consequence of a "continuing impoverishment of the Jewish masses" and an increased anti-Semitism, the Poles sought to encourage Jewish emigration.⁸⁵ Jabotinsky had been promoting the idea of a modern-day Exodus to Poland's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Felicjan Slawoy-Skladkowsky and Colonel Józef Beck, who were, by and large, supportive of his ambitious plan.⁸⁶

The Polish response to Jabotinsky's initiative was simple: if the Jews were willing to go, then the government would facilitate this by every means possible, including, if necessary, financial assistance. However, Jabotinsky needed to convince them that the British would cooperate by accommodating the potential emigrants. This proved to be a task too great, and by summer of 1938, it was apparent he had failed to convince the Poles, who clearly did not believe the British would open the borders of Palestine.⁸⁷ Consequently Beck had addressed the League of Nations "demanding that facilities be provided for the annual departure of between 80,000 and 100,000 Jews" from Poland to Madagascar, Kenya, or even Australia.⁸⁸

In an attempt to refocus the emigration plan on Palestine, Jabotinsky had instructed Joseph Schechtman, the resident revisionist envoy in Warsaw, to arrange a meeting in the foreign office with Beck to shift the Polish position.⁸⁹ For the next six months, the revisionists negotiated with the Poles about where Polish Jews would go and, in December, Jabotinsky sent Briscoe to Warsaw.⁹⁰

On November 24th, 1938, Briscoe informed the Nessuit (The Executive Council of the Revisionists) in London that he had "a very lengthy conversation with Mr. de Valera, and I am very happy at the attitude he is

now taking. . . . I am awaiting news from you as to when it will be expected of me to start for Warsaw."⁹¹ When he finally arrived in the Polish capital, Briscoe secured an audience with Colonel Beck, in the foreign office, and set about trying to put into place Jabotinsky's ambitious emigration plan. He set about his task with gusto, and his account of the meeting with Beck is a dramatic one:

On behalf of the New Zionist Movement, speaking mainly for European Jews, not for those of England or America, speaking for them, I suggest that you ask Britain to turn over the mandate for Palestine to you and make it in effect a Polish colony. You could then move all your unwanted Jews into Palestine. This would bring great relief to your country, and you would have a rich and growing colony to aid your economy.⁹²

Briscoe's plan was based on the revisionist presumption that Britain felt itself bound to consult with nations such as Poland before determining immigration schedules for Palestine.⁹³ This was not the case, as Beck had already found out; Britain merely humored the Poles by listening to their plans for Palestine, and as the war approached, the Palestine emigration plan for Poland's Jews became inconsequential to British geo-political concerns. Therefore, it is clear the mission was doomed to failure before it ever started, and Briscoe's despair was evident in his September 1939 letter to Bill Ziff, a fellow revisionist from America:

It is quite obvious that as far as the Jewish problem is concerned, a lot of it unfortunately has been solved. The population of Jews in Poland will no longer I feel be anything like the 3.5. millions, (sic) and before this war is over goodness only knows how many more of the people who profess the Jewish faith will be non-existent (sic).⁹⁴

Prophetic words indeed.

CONCLUSION

Along with Russia, no country suffered more at the hands of Nazism than Poland, a fact that was never disputed by my intervention in the *Belfast Telegraph* debate about the location of an extermination center at Auschwitz. Unequivocally, Poland as a state, and Polish citizens of every religion and social standing, were victims of terrible war crimes committed by the Hitlerite hordes.

At the same time, virulent religious anti-Semitism, which tragically manifested in vicious pogroms in both the pre-and post-war years, has blighted Poland throughout the centuries. Indeed, the evidence suggests that

anti-Semitism still pervades contemporary Poland. For example, as recently as September 2015, numerous tombs were desecrated at a Jewish cemetery in Bielsko-Biala in Southern Poland, a cemetery that contained a commemorative plaque honoring the Jews of the region who fought and died in the Polish army during World War II.⁹⁵

This worldview was reinforced in the interregnum between the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War as Polish communists, at the behest of their masters in Moscow, attempted to construct the political memory of the Nazi era. A core component of this post-war narrative was a relegation of the “Jewish catastrophe [to] the margins of discussion,” a position that would ultimately inform Polish policy “both ideologically and politically” to the present moment in time.⁹⁶ Consequently, Jewish suffering was always subordinate to Polish suffering, a worldview that transcended the fall of communist Poland and continued into contemporary nationalist Poland.

Consequently, the evidentially fragile nature of contemporary Poland’s democracy and its lack of inclusivity for minorities, whether the tiny Jewish community or various other ethnic groups, is a cause of grave concern for fellow-member states of the European Union. In January 2016, the EU proposed a monitoring mechanism to observe the state of Poland’s fragile democracy.⁹⁷ This was a reaction to the increasing curtailment of personal freedoms in Poland under the leadership of Jarosław Kaczyński and the Law and Justice Party, which is incrementally pushing contemporary Poland back to the authoritarian ethos of the communist era, a time when free speech was curtailed in pursuit of a nationalist identity that emphasized Nazi terror and Polish victimhood.

In summary, the one clear message to emerge from the whole *Belfast Telegraph* incident is the threat to scholarly integrity and the ability of the researcher to articulate with freedom aspects of a national past, however unsavory they may have been. As Dominick LaCapra has so incisively argued, although the contextualization of past traumatic events is crucial to understanding “the present and foreseeable future,” it poses “particularly acute problems for historical representation.”⁹⁸

National memory, especially in relatively new democracies, is vital to constructing a contemporary narrative; therefore, if the memory is challenged in any way, it is immediately attacked. This is a transnational response; for example, Irish historiography has been at the epicenter of a controversial and oftentimes confrontational debate on the interpretation of the political, social, and cultural forces underpinning the national movement toward independence a century ago (particularly applicable in 2016, the centenary of the Easter Rising in Dublin).⁹⁹

As a historian, I argue that this is perfectly acceptable if conducted in a

non-threatening open forum where disagreement is an essential component of scholarly progress. What is not acceptable is when an observation, however challenging it might be, leads to a personal vilification conducted through anonymous social media postings and e-mails. This undermines the very notion of independent empirical scholarship and will unless checked, lead to scholars becoming increasingly reluctant to research areas of contention.

NOTES

1. Dr. Kevin McCarthy received his PhD in history from the University of College Cork who works as an independent scholar. He is the author of *Robert Briscoe: Sinn Féin Revolutionary, Fianna Fáil Nationalist and Revisionist Zionist* (Berne: Peter Lang Academic Publishers, 2016).

2. "Belfast Telegraph's Landmark Press Victory in Covering Row over Massacre of Jews," *Belfast Telegraph*, September, 29, 2015, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northernireland/belfasttelegraphslldmark-press-victory-in-covering-row-over-massacre-of-jews-31566350.html>. See also Mick Hume, "Complainers' Charter is a Ridiculous Anchor on Free Press," *Belfast Telegraph*, September 30, 2015, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/news-analysis/complainers-charter-is-a-ridiculous-anchor-on-free-press-31569295.html>

3. André Gerrits, *The Myth of Jewish Communism: A Historical Interpretation* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, Éditions Scientifiques Internationales: 2009), 57-116.

4. Amanda Borschel-Dan, "Is new Polish law an attempt to whitewash its citizens' role in the Holocaust?," *The Times of Israel*, August 18, 2016, www.timesofisrael.com/is-new-polish-law-an-attempt-to-whitewash-its-citizens-role-in-the-holocaust/

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8. Ibid., 53.

9. Martin Reisigi and Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth

Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: Sage, 2009), 87-122. This is a highly theoretical approach, but essentially it argues that there are five critical stages in defining newcomers as the other: 1) How are persons named and referred to linguistically? 2) What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them? 3) By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimize the exclusion, discrimination, suppression, and exploitation of others? 4) From what perspective or point of view are these labels, attributions and arguments expressed? 5) Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or are they mitigated?

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11. Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Power, Conflict and Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 49-83.

12. Lee A. Smythe, *Unionists, Loyalists, & Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 53-77.

13. Helen Fein, "The Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust," in *Ethnicity*, eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 270-277.

14. Joseph O'Donoghue, "Northern Ireland Violence: A Possible End," in *International Perspectives on Violence*, eds. Leonore Loeb Adler and Florence L. Denmark (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 113-117.

15. Siobhán O'Connor, "'The Obliviousness of the Fortunate': Policy and Public Opinion towards Refugees 1933-1945", in *German-Speaking Exiles in Ireland 1933-1945*, ed. Gisela Holfter (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 90.

16. Brian Dooley, *Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland and Black America: Black and Green* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 28-48.

17. David Powell, *Nationhood and Identity: The British State since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 154-184.

18. Steven Haines, "Northern Ireland, 1968-1998," in *International Law and the Classification of Conflicts*, ed. Elizabeth Wilmshurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123-125.

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20. Anthony D. Buckley, *Symbols in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University, 1998), 50-60.

21. Clair Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 91-116.

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23. Henry McDonald, "Rebel with a confused cause," *The Guardian (UK)*, May 19, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/19/northernireland>

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26. Dallat, "Loyalists Guilty."

27. Ibid.

28. Kaja Kazmierska, "'Polish' War Camp in Occupied Land," *Belfast Telegraph*, September 14, 2015, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/letters/polish-war-camp-in-occupied-land-31520825.html>.

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32. Ibid.

33. Kevin McCarthy, *Robert Briscoe: Sinn Féin Revolutionary, Fianna Fáil Nationalist and Revisionist Zionist* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, 2016).

34. Manus I. Midlarsky, *Origins of Political Extremism: Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 209.

35. A search for "Kevin McCarthy and Polish Antisemitism" among Facebook users turns up posts in both English and Polish that call for action from the international Polish community. These can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=kevin%20mccarthy%20and%20polish%20anti%20semitism>.

36. Orla FM, a bilingual radio program serving the Polish community in the UK, devoted a radio discussion to the matter. "Poles Collaborated with Nazis. Did Belfast Get It Right?" was broadcast on October 12, 2015. It is available at <http://www.orka.fm/poles-collaborated-with-nazis-did-belfast-telegraph-get-it-right/>. The program, in English, includes a conversation

between protestor Jan Niechwiadowicz and host George Matlock. Both denounce the violent threats but do not agree with the original claim that Polish anti-Semitism was the reason for the placement of Auschwitz in Poland and argue that the newspaper handled the controversy incorrectly while also recognizing protestors' initial response may have been too strong.

37. Witold Sobkow, "Historical truth is as important as free speech," *Belfast Telegraph (UK)*, September 6, 2015, www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/letters/historical-truth-is-as-important-as-free-speech-31584292.html

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41. Michael Shafir, *Between Denial and Comparative Trivialization: Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist Europe* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002), 1-10.

42. Anna Bikont, *The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne* (London: William Heinemann, 2015).

43. Lawrence Douglas, "The Crime and the Silence: A Quest for the Truth of a Wartime Massacre, by Anna Bikont," *Irish Times*, January 23, 2016, <http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-crime-and-the-silence-a-quest-for-the-truth-of-a-wartime-massacre-by-anna-bikont-1.2506925>.

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48. Alex Duval Smith, "Polish move to strip Holocaust expert of award sparks protests," *The Guardian (UK)*, February 14, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/14/academics-defend-historian-over-polish-jew-killing-claims>

49. *Ibid.*

50. Jan Gross, "Jan Gross: Interviewed by Student of Holocaust Studies MA Program," *Haifa Holocaust Studies* [blog], February 10, 2016, URL <https://haifaholocauststudies.wordpress.com/2016/02/10/jan-gross-interviewed-by-student-of-holocaust-studies-ma-program/>.

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52. Oxana Shevel, *Migration, Refugee Policy and State Building in Postcommunist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 233.

53. *Ibid.*, 234.

54. Ewa Ochman, *Post-Communist Poland: Contested Pasts and Future Identities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 26.

55. *Ibid.*, 29.

56. Douglas, "The Crime and the Silence."

57. Slawomir Kapralski, "The Impact of Post-1989 Changes on Polish-Jewish Relations and Perceptions: Memories and Debates," in *The Religious Roots of Contemporary European Identity*, ed. Lucia Faltin and Melanie J. Wright (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), 89-104.

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