

Arts Ideas

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Save the CIA article and the Polish home on A-15 & A-17

What They Knew (Not!): 44 Years of C.I.A. Secrets

By STEPHEN KOTKIN

PRINCETON, N.J., March 16 — The wood-paneled auditorium, filled with more than 175 gray-haired men in gray suits, was buzzing. The men, mostly retired C.I.A. analysts and some current ones, were not known for their garrulousness, but many couldn't contain themselves. "This is all too much," said an otherwise sober-minded analyst. "I'm sorry. I just — I can't stop talking. This is great!"

They had gathered at Princeton University last week along with 70-some professors, students and dabblers in espionage for a two-day conference devoted to the agency's analysis of the Soviet Union from 1947 to 1991.

Did the Central Intelligence Agency, as former New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has often charged, greatly overestimate Soviet capabilities — causing the United States to spend far too much on its military — and then hide its erroneous views in an undemocratic "culture of secrecy"? Or was the agency's record "pretty good," as suggested by Lloyd Salvetti, director of the Center for the Study of Intelligence, who distributed CD-ROM's holding 19,000 pages of recently declassified documents at this public conference?

Even with the release of such documents, the questions are not easily answered, since only the agency knows what remains classified. But that is what made the Princeton conference, at the initiative of the agency, so extraordinary. Here was a chance to hear the front-line analysts candidly explaining and criticizing their work.

And beyond the insider's look at the agency was the look at the insiders. They attended schools like Princeton, Yale and Harvard, the favorite recruiting grounds, colleges that were closed to women until the 1970's. Preferring to go by their first names, Howie and Winston, Smitty and Dick, they referred to their analyses as "product" and to government officials as their "customers."

For these highly professional and dedicated men, the Soviet world, at a certain remove, was an integral part of their lives. Having toiled in utter seclusion for decades, received medals in private ceremonies and followed orders not to disclose what they knew, these desk veterans were allowed in from the cold.

Ray said he had briefed Richard M. Nixon for the "kitchen debate" with Nikita S. Khrushchev. Bill rose to say he had predicted the outbreak of the Korean War, but that his later attempt to get his own paper using the Freedom of Information Act came up empty. Eight seats over, Herb leaped up to announce that he had handled the request and apologized that the document could not be located.

They had written secret multivolume encyclopedias on things from the consistency of Soviet rope to the friction in Chinese-Soviet relations. And now they reminisced about careers in cold war puzzle solving. Like a mysterious 880-foot-long building in the Soviet Union. Was it a chicken farm or a state-of-the-art radar facility? It was radar, in fact, part of the Soviet early warning system. How did the agency figure that out? First they identified the structure from photos taken from a U-2 spy plane, then a new tool. Next they maneuvered their own giant radar dish on Chesapeake Bay to pick up radiation emitted from the "chicken farm" that analysts surmised could be caught bouncing off the moon.

Such ingenuity enabled the agency to grasp the extent and limits of the Soviet military in the 1950's without artificial satellites. The agency had correctly reported that the Soviet Union was not likely to launch a war in Europe the way the Japanese had at Pearl Harbor. Mr. Salvetti, the conference organizer, seemed vindicated.

But so, in absentia, did Senator Moynihan. Raymond Garthoff, a longtime C.I.A. military analyst, admitted that "there were consistent overestimates of the threat every

Continued on Page A17



A monument at Jedwabne, Poland, that blamed Nazi occupiers for a massacre of local Jews. It was removed on Thursday after public acknowledgment that Poles committed the murders.

Associated Press

On July 10, 1941, 1,600 Jews, nearly the entire Jewish population of the Polish village of Jedwabne, were murdered by their Polish neighbors. Some were hunted down and killed with clubs, axes and knives; most were herded into a barn and then burned alive. Although the slaughter was not a

Poles and the Jews: How Deep the Guilt?

Nostalgia for the verities of the old world order: The conference poster for a meeting of retired and current C.I.A. analysts, professors and students at Princeton University.

CIA'S ANALYSIS OF THE SOVIET UNION 1947-1991

blamed. A monument in Jedwabne (pronounced yed-VAHB-nay) declared: "Place of martyrdom of the Jewish people. Hitler's Gestapo and gendarmerie burned 1,600 people alive, July 10, 1941." But last May, Jan T. Gross, a historian at New York University, published "Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne" in Poland. The book, which will be issued in the United States in April, documents the massacre by Polish villagers in gruesome detail. In a country whose people think of themselves as wartime victims, not villains, it set off a storm of debate in corner shops, cafes and classrooms, and among the country's political and church leaders. Some Poles have continued to deny Polish responsibility; most have tried to wrestle with the country's history of anti-Semitism and questions of collective guilt. Jozef Cardinal Glemp, the Roman Catholic Primate, and President Aleksander Kwasniewski have publicly asked for forgiveness, and on Thursday the Jedwabne memorial was removed. Adam Michnik is a dissident and historian who spent six years in prison under the postwar Communist regime, served as an adviser to the Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and is now editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland's largest daily newspaper. He wrote this article for *The New York Times*, and it was translated from the Polish by Ewa Zadrzyńska.

By ADAM MICHNIK

Do Poles, along with Germans, bear guilt for the Holocaust? It is hard to imagine a more absurd claim.

Not a single Polish family was spared by Hitler and Stalin. The two totalitarian dictatorships obliterated three million Poles and three million Polish citizens classified as Jews by the Nazis.

Poland was the first country to oppose Hitler's demands and the first to stand against his aggression. Poland never had a Quisling. No Polish regiment fought on behalf of the Third Reich. Betrayed by the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, Poles fought alongside the anti-Nazi forces from the first day until the last. And inside Poland armed resistance to the German occupation was widespread.

The British prime minister paid homage to the Poles for their role in the Battle of Britain and the president of the United States called Poles an "inspiration" to the world. Yet that didn't stop them from delivering Poland into Stalin's clutches at Yalta. Heroes of the Polish resistance — enemies of Stalin's Communism — ended up in Soviet gulags and Polish Communist prisons.

A horror long hidden revives an old debate.

All of these truths contribute to Poland's image of itself as an innocent and noble victim of foreign violence and intrigue. After the war, while the West was able to reflect on what had happened, Stalinist terror stymied public discussion in Poland about the war, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

At the same time, anti-Semitic traditions were deeply rooted in Poland. In the 19th century, when the Polish state didn't exist, the modern nation that was to emerge was shaped by ethnic and religious ties and by opposing antagonistic neighbors often hostile to the dream of Polish independence. Anti-Semitism was the ideological glue of great political nationalistic formations. And yet it was also used at various points as a tool by Russian occupiers in accordance with the principle "divide et impera."

In the 1920's and 30's, anti-Semitism took

Continued on Page A17

MUSIC REVIEW

Stravinsky as Show Business

By ALLAN KOZINN

Jonathan Sheffer's concerts with his Eos Orchestra are typically meant to engage the eye as well as the ear, and in the case of his all-Stravinsky program on Thursday evening at the Ethical Culture Society, that meant turning a group of works composed between 1914 and 1918 into an evening of theater pieces. The fact that the music was composed in the shadow of World War I, and included "L'Histoire du Soldat," gave the program a useful (if false) theatrical unity. Christopher Alden's staging (with costumes by Fabio Toblini and lighting by Adam Silverman) had a military theme, with a perverse touch: both the licentious love songs of "Pribaoutki" and the barnyard allegory, "Renard," were performed by singers in military fatigues, but the Soldier in "L'Histoire du Soldat" wore a spiffy aquamarine suit and tie.

There was an appealing symmetry in the program. The one purely instrumental work, "Ragtime," was in effect the overture and foreshadowed the bow to jazz that drives "Histoire."

In truth Stravinsky does not yield much ground: he couches his music in an accent that is identifiably jazzy, yet his own hallmarks — the characteristically sharp rhythms, lopsided melodies and coarsened timbres — remain dominant. In "Pribaoutki" and "Renard," by contrast, Stravinsky's Russian roots are tempered by an

Love songs are sung in military fatigues; a soldier wears an aqua suit and tie.

adopted French urbanity.

Mr. Sheffer and his musicians played the music energetically and with its sharp edges intact, and there was some superb playing by Joel Pichon, the concertmaster, in "Histoire." John Packard, a baritone, gave an enlivening account of "Pribaoutki" and was joined by David Ossenfort and Peter Kazaras, tenors, and Steven Humes, bass, in a brisk rendering of "Renard" in which the barracks setting abetted the work's undercurrent of brutality.

The evening's heart, though, was the performance of "Histoire" by the actor Philip Littell, who made his own adaptation of the libretto. Playing all the parts — the Soldier, the Devil and the handful of incidental roles — Mr. Littell endowed the work with an irreverent cartoonish energy. If any work of Stravinsky's can bear that approach it is "Histoire," and Mr. Littell's reading was both funny and illuminating.

A Botticelli Wonder, Bypassing U.S. Museums

By CELESTINE BOHLEN

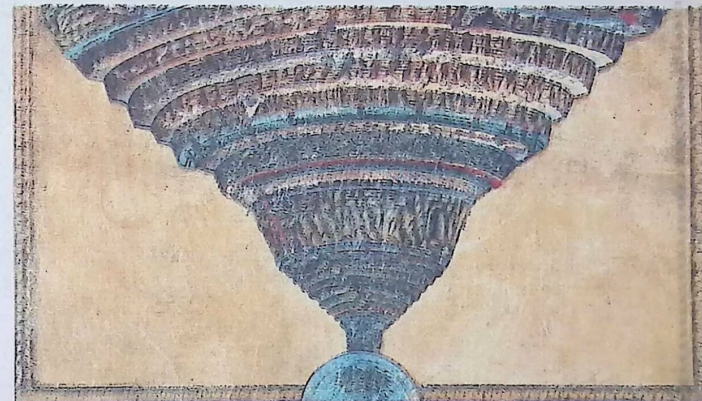
Had it not been for a lawsuit brought in California against the Vatican Library in Rome, a much-coveted exhibition of 92 drawings by the Renaissance master Sandro Botticelli illustrating Dante's "Divine Comedy," seven of which belong to the Vatican, would be ending a three-month tour at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

But because of the Vatican's fear of exposing its drawings to legal claims the exhibition never came to New York. Instead, it went to London, where it opens today at the Royal Academy. "The arrival of this show in London is a triumph of curatorial diplomacy for which British art lovers should be grateful," trumpeted a preview in *The Times* of London this week.

"Thank the lord," said Norman Rosenthal, exhibitions secretary at the Royal Academy, who for decades had been in pursuit of an exhibition of the Botticelli cycle, which he described as "one of the divine meetings in the history of Western culture."

Not that the British are gloating, but the Americans are certainly chagrined. "As an institution, we are very disappointed," said Harold Holzer, spokesman for the Metropolitan Museum. "This was something that was extraordinary, perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The show, which originated last year at the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin and moved later to Rome, unites the 92 extant drawings from Botticelli's Dante cycle for



From "Alessandro Botticelli" (Konemann)

A detail from "The Abyss of Hell," a colored drawing on parchment by Botticelli.

the first time in 500 years.

Until 1993 the 85 drawings now at the Kupferstichkabinett were divided among museums in East and West Berlin. Because of their sensitivity to light, they are rarely exhibited, and the current tour is strictly limited. The illustrations — of which four are in color and the rest are drawn in a faint golden brown ink — offer "a breathtakingly intimate glimpse of Botticelli's creative process," according to a December 1998 de-

scription of the proposed show written by the Met's staff.

But in the spring of 1999 lawyers for the Met were told that the Vatican was not willing to make loans to the United States for fear that the drawings could get ensnared in the lawsuit pending in Federal District Court in central California. As it turned out and as the Metropolitan said it learned only this week, the lawsuit against

Continued on Page A18

What They Knew (Not!): Telling 44 Years of C.I.A. Secrets

Continued From Page A15

year from 1978 to 1985." Douglas MacEachin, a 32-year veteran and former deputy director, agreed, saying: "The biggest single trap for intelligence estimates was Soviet intentions. We 'knew' what their intentions were before they did." He added, "We joked, 'Let's cable Moscow with the news.'"

Mr. MacEachin said that the agency did not fully realize how the Soviet military industrial complex drove its own institutional growth, which took on a life of its own without a conscious political strategy. He said the agency also missed the extent to which Leonid I. Brezhnev's military buildup from the late 60's to the early 80's was based on Soviet perceptions of American military strength. And the agency overestimated the accuracy of Soviet missiles. That, too, derived from a tendency to interpret Soviet realities through American eyes.

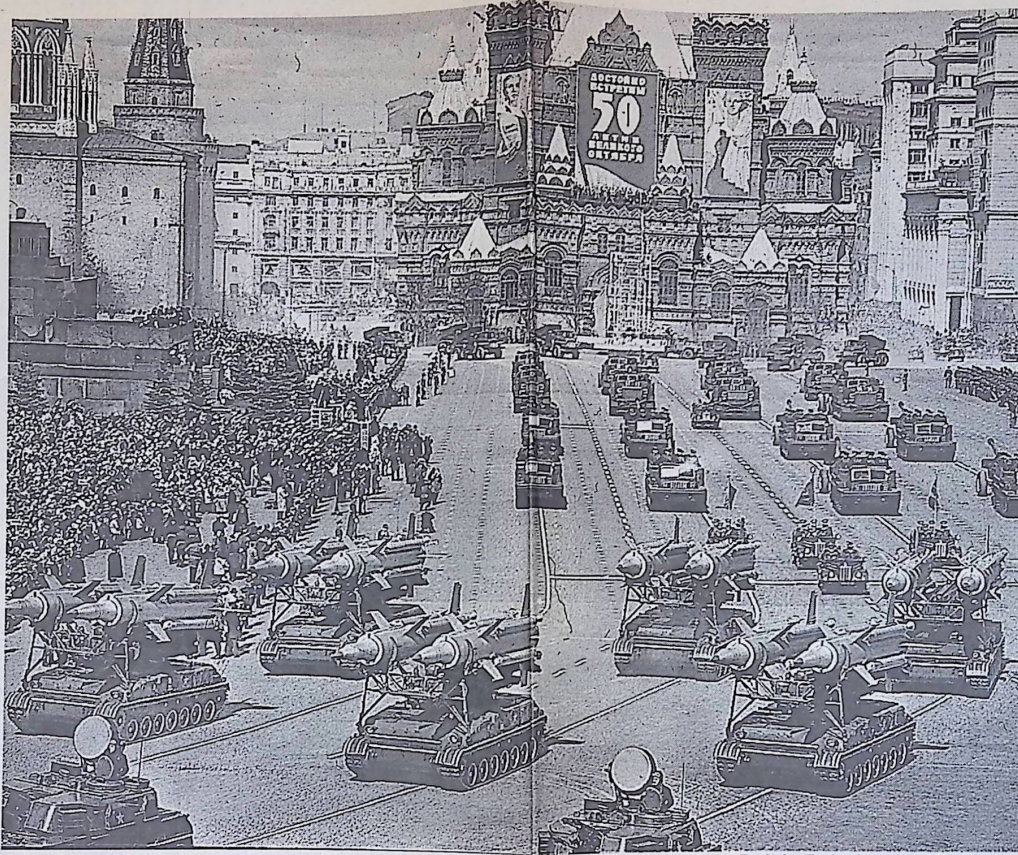
But where else could government officials, the "customers," turn? Jack F. Matlock Jr., a former envoy to the Soviet Union for the Reagan and George Bush administrations, summed up his appreciation for the C.I.A. by noting that everyone ignored Pentagon intelligence on the Soviet Union because "it would never include anything that might threaten to reduce the Pentagon budget."

Indeed, independent analysis of the Soviet arsenal was indispensable. The agency's best-guess inventories proved that weapons agreements could be "verified." Without them, arms control would not have been possible.

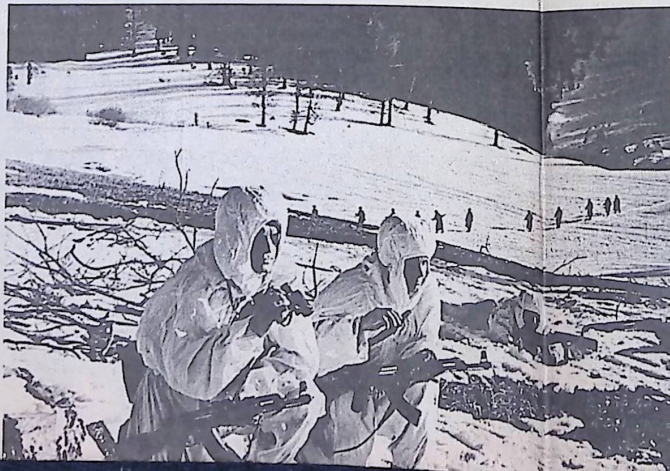
The contribution was still deeper. Even when wrong, the precision offered in agency intelligence estimates eventually cast a calming spell. Knowing in detail how the Soviet Union could destroy the world a thousand times over, paradoxically, helped reduce the hysterical levels of paranoia in the nuclear age. "We understood the plumbing of the Soviet armed forces," boomed Fritz W. Ermarth, another retired agency veteran, "so we did not overreact in periods of tension."

Elsewhere in the agency, Soviet statistical manuals (when they were available) were subjected to econometric analysis, and satellite imagery was used to measure floor space in factories and deduce production capacities. Quickly it became clear that the Soviet Union would not overtake the United States, but a debate ensued about the size of its economy: was it 30 percent or 60 percent of the American economy? And what was its growth rate?

One trip to a Soviet manufacturing plant would have provided some ready answers, but even though travel to the Soviet Union became possible in 1957, agency desk analysts for the most part were not sent to do fieldwork. Analysts who did travel to Moscow much later, and who had assumed that Soviet goods were probably similar to the lowest-end items in the Sears, Roebuck catalog, reported having been shocked by their shoddiness.



Top, Sovfoto/Eastfoto; bottom, United Press International



The C.I.A. was able to grasp the extent and limits of Soviet power in the 1950's, but analysts admit that it made a string of overestimates from 1978 to 1985.

were worth quite a bit inside the Soviet Union, since their output was often a monopoly and they also provided housing, nurseries and secure jobs, not to mention urban power grids and mass transit systems. Considered in world market terms, however, those same factories were often destroyers of wealth: their output was valued at less than the cost of their inputs.

Puzzling over the worth of an economy without market prices or a real currency, agency economists, at policymakers' request, estimated the Soviet gross national product in dollars. But that willy-nilly rendered it as part of the global economy even though it wasn't. Here was the crucial question, and it did not involve growth rates or size estimates but politics: How long could the Soviet Union wall itself off from the rest

showed.

James Millar, an academic economist and agency consultant, noted that the C.I.A. did get Soviet trends right (i.e., downward) and had caught the onset of declining growth under Brezhnev. "But C.I.A. did not have the courage of its convictions," he concluded, adding, "We underestimated the costs of haste in industrialization, of autarky, empire, excessive standardization and the suppression of economists."

Did the agency do better than the Sovietologists at universities? "No, they did about the same," Mr. Millar said. Should the agency have done better, given its big budget and access to wider information? He shrugged his shoulders. Later Richard Kerr, a 32-year agency veteran and deputy director in 1989-92, finished the thought, calling the agency "a W.P.A. project for economists."

Predictably, both the analysts and the organization as a whole found it difficult to relinquish views in which they were deeply invested. The economist Paul Samuelson, noted Steven Rosen, director of the Olin Center for Strategic Studies at Harvard, liked to say, "We make progress in economic theory one academic funeral at a time." Mr. Ermarth pointed out that they didn't understand that the Soviets couldn't translate their military might into political and diplomatic leverage. Worse, an agency paper on "the domestic stress on the Soviet system," he said, was produced only in the fall of 1985, "embarrassingly late." Another paper bore the title, "Moscow's troubles with empire — so what?"

One could go further and argue that the C.I.A. underestimated the crushing effect on the Soviet Union of America's social welfare programs (which blunted the Communist critique of capitalism), expanding home ownership, and export of mass culture, and the example exerted by an open and democratic society. It was a combination of weapons for which the Soviet Union had no answer.

After the stunning Soviet breakup, John McLaughlin, the current deputy director of the agency, said, "We still had a Soviet canned goods specialist and a Soviet timber specialist." Soon, however, such analysts "found themselves studying Uzbek language or Ukrainian politics."

Gone is the problem of gathering information about a closed society, Mr. McLaughlin said. He described an analyst starting her day now by profitably examining 20 Russian Web sites, the same ones available on any computer. But the agency's task has not been made easier, for the "clarity of the old paradigm" is gone, he said.

The picture that emerged over two days was of thousands of analysts, bounded by their consciences but also their worldviews, producing a vast body of intelligence. Some of it was indispensable; and some, within limits, offered divergent views. But how much of this colossal effort affected or even reached policymakers?

James R. Schlesinger, a former director and secretary of defense, observed that

Stephen Kotkin, the director of Russian studies at Princeton, is the author of "Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000," to be published this fall.



The Poles and the Jews

Continued From Page A15

hold. It became a fixture of radical right-wing nationalists and it could be detected in the utterances of the hierarchy of the Catholic church. Though historically Poland had been a relatively safe haven for them, Jews began to feel increasingly discriminated against and unsafe — and they were, with noisy anti-Semitic groups, segregated seating at universities and calls for pogroms.

During Hitler's occupation, the Polish nationalistic and anti-Semitic right didn't collaborate with the Nazis, as the right wing did elsewhere in Europe, but actively participated in the anti-Hitler underground. Polish anti-Semites fought against Hitler, and some of them even rescued Jews, though this was punishable by death.

Thus we have a singularly Polish paradox: on occupied Polish soil, a person could be an anti-Semite, a hero of the resistance and a savior of Jews.

Fourteen years ago an essay recalled a well-known appeal to save the Jews that was published by a famous Catholic writer, Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, in August 1942. She wrote of hundreds of thousands of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto awaiting death without hope of rescue and how the entire world — England, America, Jews overseas and Poles — was silent. "The dying Jews are surrounded by Pilates washing their hands," she wrote. "This silence cannot be tolerated any longer. No matter what the reasons for it, this silence is a disgrace."

Speaking of Catholic Poles, she continued: "Our feelings toward the Jews haven't changed. We still consider them the political, economic and ideological enemies of Poland. Furthermore, we are aware that they hate us even more than they hate the Germans, that they hold us responsible for their misfortune. . . . The knowledge of these feelings doesn't relieve us of the duty of condemning the crime. We don't want to be Pilates. We have no chance to act against the German crimes, we can't help or save anybody, but we protest from the depths of our hearts, filled with compassion, indignation and awe. . . . The compulsory participation of the Polish nation in this bloody show, which is taking place on Polish soil, can breed indifference to the wrongs, the sadism and above all the sinister conviction that one can kill one's neighbors and go unpunished."

This extraordinary appeal, full of idealism and courage while openly poisoned by anti-Semitic stereotypes, illustrates the paradox of Polish attitudes toward the dying Jews. The anti-Semitic tradition compels the Poles to perceive the Jews as aliens while the Polish heroic tradition compels them to save them.

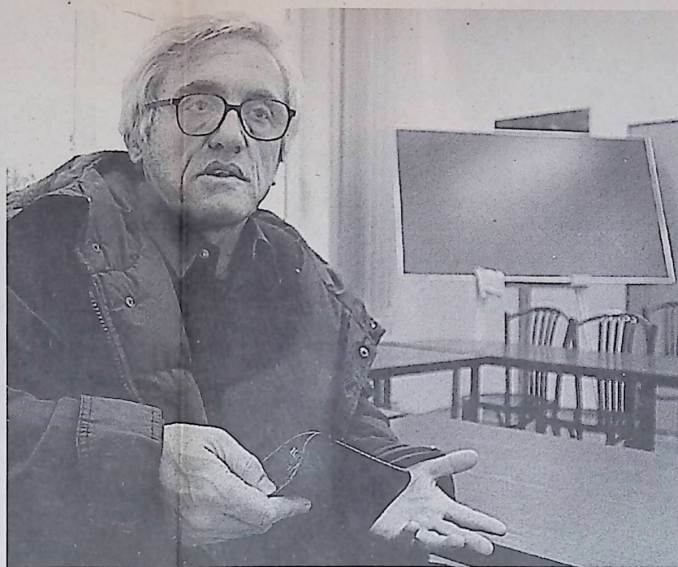
The same Kossak-Szczucka, in a letter to a friend after the war, described a wartime incident on a Warsaw bridge: "Another time, on the Kierbedz bridge, a German saw a Pole giving alms to a starving Jewish urchin. He pounced and ordered the Pole to throw the child into the river or else he would be shot along with the young beggar. 'There is nothing you can do to help him. I will kill him anyway; he is not allowed to be here. You can go free, if you drown him, or I will kill you, too. Drown him or die. I will count . . . 1, 2 —'

"The Pole could not take it. He broke down and threw the child over the rail into the river. The German gave him a pat on the shoulder. 'Braver Kerl.' They went their separate ways. Two days later, the Pole hanged himself."

The lives of those Poles who felt the guilt of being helpless witnesses to atrocity were marked by a deep trauma, which surfaces with each new debate about anti-Semitism, Polish-Jewish relations and the Holocaust. After all, people in Poland know deep inside that they were the ones who moved into the houses vacated by Jews herded into the ghetto. And there were other reasons for guilt. There were some Poles who turned Jews in and others who hid Jews for money.

Polish public opinion is rarely united, but almost all Poles react very sharply when confronted with the charge that Poles get their anti-Semitism with their mothers' milk and with accusations of their complicity in the Shoah. For the anti-Semites, who are plentiful on the margins of Poland's political life, those attacks are proof of the international anti-Polish Jewish conspiracy. To normal people who came of age in the years of falsifications and silence about the Holocaust, these allegations seem unjust.

To these people, Jan Tomasz Gross's book "Neighbors," which revealed the story of the murder by Poles of 1,600 Jews in Jedwabne, was a terrible shock. It is difficult to describe the extent of this shock. Mr. Gross's book has generated a heated response comparable to the Jewish community's reaction to the publication of Hannah Arendt's "Eichmann in Jerusalem." Arendt wrote about the collaboration of some of the Jewish communities with the Nazis: "The Jewish Councils of Elders were informed by Eichmann or his men of how many Jews were needed to fill each train, and they made out the list of deportees. The Jews registered, filled out innumerable forms, answered pages and pages of questionnaires regarding their property so that it could be seized the more easily; they then assembled at the collection points and boarded the trains. The few who tried to hide or to escape were rounded up by a special Jewish police force. . . . We know



Associated Press

Jan T. Gross, who exposed Polish responsibility for the massacre of Jews at Jedwabne.

how the Jewish officials felt when they became instruments of murder — like captains 'whose ships were about to sink and who succeeded in bringing them safe to port by casting overboard a great part of their precious cargo.' " Soon afterward, her Jewish critics said that Hannah Arendt claimed that Jews themselves implemented their Shoah.

Some of the reactions to the book by Mr. Gross were as emotional. An average Polish reader couldn't believe that something like this could have happened. I must admit that I couldn't believe it either, and I thought that my friend Jan Gross had fallen victim to a falsification. But the murder in Jedwabne, preceded by a bestial pogrom, did take place and must weigh on the collective consciousness of the Poles — and on my individual consciousness.

The Polish debate about Jedwabne has been going on for several months. It is a serious debate, full of sadness and sometimes terror — as if the whole society was suddenly forced to carry the weight of this terrible 60-year-old crime; as if all Poles were made to admit their guilt collectively and ask for forgiveness.

I don't believe in collective guilt or collective responsibility or any other responsibility except the moral one. And therefore I ponder what exactly is my individual responsibility and my own guilt. Certainly I cannot be responsible for that crowd of

murderers who set the barn in Jedwabne on fire. Similarly, today's citizens of Jedwabne cannot be blamed for that crime. When I hear a call to admit my Polish guilt, I feel hurt the same way the citizens of today's Jedwabne feel when they are interrogated by reporters from around the world.

But when I hear that Mr. Gross's book, which revealed the truth about the crime, is a lie that was concocted by the international Jewish conspiracy against Poland, that is when I feel guilty. Because these false excuses are in fact nothing else but a rationalization of that crime.

As I write this text, I am weighing words carefully and repeating Montesquieu: "I am a man thanks to nature, I am a Frenchman thanks to coincidence." By coincidence I am a Pole with Jewish roots. Almost my whole family was devoured by the Holocaust. My relatives could have perished in Jedwabne. Some of them were Communists or relatives of Communists, some were craftsmen, some merchants, perhaps some rabbis. But all were Jews, according to the Nuremberg laws of the Third Reich. All of them could have been herded into that barn, which was set on fire by Polish criminals.

I do not feel guilty for those murdered, but I do feel responsible. Not that they were murdered — I could not have stopped that. I feel guilty that after they died they were murdered again, denied a decent burial, denied tears, denied truth about this hideous

crime, and that for decades a lie was repeated.

This is my fault. For lack of imagination or time, for convenience and spiritual laziness, I did not ask myself certain questions and did not look for answers. Why? After all, I was among those who actively pushed to reveal the truth about the Katyn massacre of Polish soldiers, I worked to tell the truth about the Stalinist trials in Poland, about the victims of the Communist repression. Why then did I not look for the truth about the murdered Jews of Jedwabne? Perhaps because I subconsciously feared the cruel truth about the Jewish fate during that time. After all, the bestial mob in Jedwabne was not unique. In all of the countries conquered by the Soviets after 1939, there were horrible acts of terror against the Jews in the summer and in the autumn of 1941. They died at the hands of their Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, Ukrainian, Russian and Belarussian neighbors. I think that the time has come to reveal the truth about these hideous acts. I will try to contribute to this.

Writing these words, I feel a specific schizophrenia: I am a Pole, and my shame about the Jedwabne's murder is a Polish shame. At the same time, I know that if I had been there in Jedwabne, I would have been killed as a Jew.

Who then am I, as I write these words? Thanks to nature, I am a man, and I am responsible to other people for what I do and what I do not do. Thanks to my choice, I am a Pole, and I am responsible to the world for the evil inflicted by my countrymen. I do so out of my free will, by my own choice, and by the deep urging of my conscience.

But I am also a Jew who feels a deep brotherhood with those who were murdered as Jews. From this perspective, I assert that whoever tries to remove the crime in Jedwabne from the context of its epoch, whoever uses this example to generalize that this is how only the Poles and all the Poles behaved, is lying. And this lie is as repulsive as the lie that was told for many years about the crime in Jedwabne.

A Polish neighbor might have saved one of my relatives from the hands of the executioners who pushed him into the barn. And indeed, there were many such Polish neighbors — the forest of Polish trees in the Avenue of the Righteous in Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, is dense.

For these people who lost their lives saving Jews, I feel responsible, too. I feel guilty when I read so often in Polish and foreign newspapers about the murderers who killed Jews, and note the deep silence about those who rescued Jews. Do the murderers deserve more recognition than the righteous?

The Polish primate, the Polish president and the Rabbi of Warsaw said almost in one voice that a tribute to the Jedwabne victims should serve the cause of reconciling Poles and Jews in the truth. I desire nothing more. If it doesn't happen, it will be also my fault.