

**POLITICAL MURDER AND THE VICTORY OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM
IN INTERWAR POLAND**

by

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DEDICATION

In memory of my Grandfather, Andrzej Pieczyński, who never talked about patriotism but whose life bore witness to its most beautiful traditions and who, among many other things, taught me both to love the modern history of Poland and to think about it critically.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ChZJN/ChJN	<i>Chrześcijański Związek Jedności Narodowej</i>	Christian Union of National Unity
ChD	<i>Chrześcijańska Demokracja</i>	Christian Democrats
ND	<i>Narodowa Demokracja</i>	National Democrats
NPR	<i>Narodowa Partia Robotnicza</i>	National Workers' Party
NZR	<i>Narodowy Związek Robotniczy</i>	National Workers' Union
PD	<i>Postępowa Demokracja</i>	Progressive Democrats
POW	<i>Polska Organizacja Wojskowa</i>	Polish Military Organization
PPS	<i>Polska Partia Socjalistyczna</i>	Polish Socialist Party
PPSD	<i>Polska Partia Socjaldemokratyczna</i>	Polish Social Democratic Party
PSL	<i>Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe "Piast"</i>	Polish Peasant Party "Piast"
SChN	<i>Stronnictwo Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe</i>	The Christian National Party
SDKPiL	<i>Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy</i>	The Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania
UNP	<i>Unia Narodowo-Państwowa</i>	The National Civic Union
ZLN	<i>Związek Ludowo-Narodowy</i>	The National People's Union
ZPK	<i>Związek Państwowy na Kresach</i>	The Civic Union of the Borderlands

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the impact of the 1922 election and murder of Gabriel Narutowicz, the first president of Poland, on the discursive field of Polish nationalism. Narutowicz was seen as an illegitimate president by the nationalist right, and murdered by a nationalist sympathizer because of the support offered to him by Jewish, Ukrainian, and German deputies during the election. Using a blend of cultural, intellectual, and microhistorical approaches, the dissertation demonstrates that the most important shifts in the discursive field of Polish nationalism in the early 20th century occurred in response to specific, contingent, political events. The election and murder of Narutowicz constituted the most important in a series of these events. By examining the pre- and post- assassination discourse of both left- and right-wing Polish thinkers and politicians, the dissertation shows that the murder, and the street violence associated with it, propelled the left to abandon its “civic” vision of the imagined community of the nation. At the same time, despite suffering a temporary setback, the nationalist right quickly reaffirmed its commitment to anti-Semitism and further radicalized its “ethnic” nationalism. Therefore, the murder of Narutowicz played an instrumental role in the transformation of the discursive structures of Polish nationalism between 1918 and 1939,

and can help explain the ultimate victory of an ethnic and anti-Semitic nationalism in interwar Poland.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

On December 16, 1922, after a mere 46 hours in office, Gabriel Narutowicz, the first president of the newly reborn Polish Republic, was assassinated by a supporter of the right-wing National Democratic movement (*Narodowa Demokracja* or *Endecja*). From the very moment of he was elected, the new president's legitimacy was questioned by a substantial part of Polish society and political class because of the role played by the so-called "national minorities" in his election. Due to the distribution of votes in the parliamentary elections of November 1922, neither the left nor the nationalist right, composed of the National Democrats and their fellow travelers, had enough votes in the National Assembly to elect a candidate of their choosing. The balance of votes between these two rival camps was held by the National Minorities' Bloc, an unwieldy alliance of Jewish, Ukrainian, German, and Belarusian parties.

When the Bloc's votes tipped the scale in favor of Narutowicz, the candidate of the left, a violent and fiercely anti-Semitic campaign was orchestrated against the new president. It was waged jointly by the National Democratic press, parliamentary deputies, and demonstrators in the street, all of which claimed that only a "Polish majority" had the

right to elect the president of Poland. While the tone was set by the right-wing press, the most memorable aspects of the campaign took place in the streets of Warsaw. On the eve of the election, reported the right-wing daily *Gazeta Warszawska*, a large crowd of youths had gathered in front of the Parliament to await the announcement of the results. When the victory of Narutowicz was announced:

From the breasts of the youth a spontaneous call went forth: 'We don't want this kind of president! We don't know him! Down with the Jews!' This chant echoed through the streets of Warsaw and spontaneously a march was formed.¹

Right-wing thugs, mostly university students, rampaged through the streets, breaking windows, and beating up "passers-by with Semitic features" all over the city.² The violence expressed itself mostly against Jews, and "Down with the Jews!" became the "most popular" slogan of the rioters.³ Socialist parliamentary deputies were also detained and beaten up. General Haller, leader of the so-called "Blue Army," infamous for its role in the anti-Jewish violence of 1919-20, made a speech encouraging the rioters who, in their turn, chanted "Our leader!" A fascist style putsch appeared to be a distinct possibility. The Italian Fascists had seized power in Rome only a few months earlier and Polish right-wing papers were full of admiration for their exploits.

In response, Socialists organized their own demonstrations and worker militias attacked the rampaging students. Shots were fired amid the fighting and by December 12, two people were dead and scores wounded. The situation deescalated somewhat after

December 13 because of more effective policing and calls for restraint by National Democratic leadership, which seems to have become fearful of the forces it unleashed.

On December 16 despite the still tense situation in Warsaw, President Narutowicz paid a visit to the opening of an art exhibition at the *Zachęta* gallery. Shortly after entering, he was shot in the back by Eligiusz Niewiadomski, a well-known painter and member of the *Zachęta* Society. Niewiadomski was not formally affiliated with the National Democratic movement, but he shared its ideology, was a rabid anti-Semite, and was clearly influenced by the right-wing press campaign against the president.

The violence, instability, and rabid anti-Semitism that rocked the young Polish democracy in 1922 did not surprise many European observers, who by and large viewed Poland as a backward, reactionary, nationalistic, and anti-Semitic kind of place.⁴ But this turn of events *would*, in fact, have been most surprising to Europeans just two generations earlier. In February 1848, Karl Marx delivered a speech commemorating the Cracow Uprising, staged by radical Polish insurrectionaries against the Habsburgs in 1846. In his speech Marx was full of praise not only for the insurrectionaries but, indeed, for what he referred to as “Polish nationalism.” Poland, Marx said, “set all of Europe a glorious example, by identifying the national cause with the democratic cause and the emancipation of the oppressed class.”⁵ Nor was Marx alone in his positive assessment of Polish “nationalism.” The identification of the Polish national movement with progress and liberty was commonplace, among both Poles and foreigners, through the vast majority of the long nineteenth century. The cause of Polish independence, aimed at

toppling the reactionary Hapsburg, Hohenzollern, and Romanov monarchies, was widely assumed to be republican, leftist, and progressive.

The most prolific champions of Polish patriotism, such as the insurrectionary leader Tadeusz Kościuszko, the great romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz, or even the relatively conservative statesman Prince Adam Czartoryski imagined that at the heart of the Polish struggle for independence was the quest for universal freedom and the liberation of *all* oppressed peoples from slavery, in both political and social realms. But by the time Poland was on the threshold of regaining independence in 1918, this rosy picture had all but faded away. Indeed, during a very short period of time, between roughly the 1880s and the 1910s, a new strain of Polish nationalism had developed. This new nationalism, first formulated by the National Democratic movement, was widely associated with chauvinism and intolerance; it very quickly became virtually synonymous with anti-Semitism.⁶ National Democratic intellectuals, led by the movement's theoretical heavyweight Roman Dmowski, quickly came to dominate many aspects of Polish political culture. Most importantly, Dmowski, a committed anti-Semite who had been instrumental in organizing anti-Jewish economic initiatives before World War I emerged, by 1918, as one the most prolific and prominent Polish statesmen. Especially in France, he was seen as the primary champion of the Polish independence struggle. It was largely for this reason that independent Poland was received with skepticism by many Western liberals and, to an even greater extent, by Jewish communities in the West.

But the National Democrats' high visibility did not mean that they alone represented Polish patriotism or that they spoke for all Poles. Even as Dmowski and his National Democratic followers represented Poland at the Treaty of Versailles, inside the country power was seized by Józef Piłsudski, who embodied a very different strain of patriotism and thinking about the nation. Piłsudski was a romantic, a former socialist and revolutionary, who had been raised in and subscribed to a tradition of Polish patriotism that Marx would have recognized and approved of. He was also a self-described "Lithuanian," who had gone out of his way to reach out to Lithuanians, Belarusians, Jews, and later Ukrainians, and to include all these groups in the imagined community of the Polish nation.⁷ In short, he embodied a vastly different conception of Polish patriotism which, contrary to what many Western observers may have thought, was still very much alive in 1918.

In fact, the violence which followed the election of Narutowicz, and the president's murder itself, must be seen in the context of a fierce and protracted clash *within* the discursive field of Polish nationalism. To use less cumbersome (though perhaps less precise) terms, the violence was a major battle in the discursive war over the definition and meaning of the very idea of Poland. This struggle was waged by two powerful ideological and political "camps" (*obozy*), which included but ultimately transcended individual political parties, programs, and movements. The first, associated with Roman Dmowski and the National Democrats, represented an exclusive, anti-Semitic, and ethnic brand of nationalism. The second, encapsulated under the broad heading of the "Patriotic

Left” (*Lewica Niepodległościowa*), and embodied by the National Democrats’ nemesis Józef Piłsudski, championed a more inclusive, liberal, and civic conception of Poland.⁸

The political history of interwar Poland has traditionally been portrayed, by both historians and contemporaries, as being conditioned largely by the struggle between these two powerful camps and their seemingly larger-than-life leaders. As the conservative publicist Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz wrote in his history of the Second Republic:

The history I am writing might as well be entitled “Dmowski and Piłsudski.”
The history of my generation is the defined by the struggle between these
two men.⁹

As late as 1989, the great émigré publicist Jerzy Giedroyc offered the well-known and illustrative quip that even after the fall of Communism, Poland continued to be ruled by two coffins—those of Dmowski and Piłsudski.¹⁰

More recently, however, historians have been skeptical of such sweeping assessments. For example, according to Robert Blobaum, the portrayal of Polish politics in the early twentieth century as the struggle between nationalism and socialism, the National Democratic Party and the Polish Socialist Party, or between Dmowski and Piłsudski, has become a “textbook” rendition of history, which ignores the complexities of mass politics, neglects other political forces (most notably the peasant parties) and, perhaps most importantly, focuses on the surface level of politics while neglecting the deeper social structures which underpinned the whole edifice of political life.¹¹ It may therefore be argued that the roles of Dmowski and Piłsudski, and of the struggle between

the National Democrats and the Patriotic Left, have been exaggerated or, at the very least, that little new can be said on the subject.

Nonetheless, the literature fails to emphasize or often even acknowledge a crucial dimension of the conflict symbolized by these two figures. Understanding the violence surrounding the election of Narutowicz, as well as the president's murder, is impossible without revisiting the debate between Dmowski and Piłsudski or, to be more accurate, between the political traditions and identities they embodied to their followers. In the historical literature, the disagreements between the two leaders are most often portrayed in terms of tactical or strategic differences. Most frequently, Dmowski's "realism," anti-German orientation, relatively modest territorial demands, and legalism are contrasted with Piłsudski's "idealism," Russophobia, expansionism in Poland's eastern "borderlands," and advocacy of violent revolutionary action against the Partitioning Powers.¹² In somewhat more theoretically sophisticated accounts, Dmowski's focus on the "nation" is contrasted with Piłsudski's emphasis on the "state."¹³ Yet, as both Mackiewicz and Giedroyc understood, the debate was really about much more than that.

Most accurately, Piłsudski and Dmowski are seen as symbols of, respectively, "civic" and "ethnic" conceptions of the nation.¹⁴ The reason why the conflict between these two giants of modern Polish history continues to captivate historians and publicists today is that it transcends tactical differences, economic programs, and even the question of the proper relationship between the nation and the state. As Poles entered the world of modern politics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they necessarily became drawn

into new modes of talking, thinking, and feeling about “Poland” and, what followed, different ways of “being Poles.” At its core, to paraphrase Benedict Anderson, the conflict between Dmowski and Piłsudski revolved around different ways of *imagining the imagined community*.¹⁵

Dmowski and Piłsudski were not the sole or (especially in Piłsudski’s case) not even the primary authors of different conceptions of the imagined community of Poland. However, their importance lies in the fact that for most Poles they came to signify or even *embody* radically different ways of thinking about and affectively identifying with their country. Therefore, on the most fundamental level, the disagreement between the National Democrats and the followers of Piłsudski revolved around identifying with different imagined communities. The fact that both the imagined communities in question had the same name and many common features, should not blind us to the fact that the Poland which the National Democrats fought for was very different from the one which prompted the Piłsudczyks to put their lives on the line.¹⁶ To say that one was a Piłsudczyk or a National Democrat meant not simply following a particular political program or ideology but *feeling* differently as a Pole.

Thus, in 1918, when Poland was suddenly “reborn,” anti-Semitic nationalism was certainly a very powerful force in both culture and politics and it profoundly affected the manner in which those Poles influenced by National Democratic ideology imagined their national community. But it was nowhere near hegemonic. In fact, it faced formidable discursive rivals, championed by capable and charismatic political leaders like Piłsudski

and the powerful “camp” (*obóz*) of socialists, radicals, liberals, and moderate conservatives which coalesced around him. In fact, as the perceptive Henry Morgenthau Sr., head of the 1919 American mission to Poland, observed anti-Semitism and “the Jewish Question” were intimately bound up with the “family feud” taking place *within* Polish politics and society.¹⁷

Seen from the perspective of the late 1930s, however, the skepticism felt by many Western observers about the new Polish state and its people may appear to have been justified. Through two decades of independence, nationalism and anti-Semitism appeared to have been getting ever more virulent.¹⁸ Thus, even historians sympathetic to interwar Poland, insofar as they acknowledge the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism (which is not always the case), see its victory as being somehow inevitable.¹⁹ It is my view, however, that the ultimate triumph of political anti-Semitism in Poland, by no means inevitable in 1918, is a puzzle which needs to be explained. And the events surrounding the murder of Narutowicz, as we will see, are an important though almost entirely forgotten piece of the answer to this puzzle.

*

Studies of interwar Polish nationalism and anti-Semitism are largely in Polish and focused primarily on the radical right and the National Democrats. More general studies of interwar Poland are overwhelmingly dominated by old fashioned political history and focus almost exclusively on the role of individual leaders, ideologies, and narrowly understood “political” movements.²⁰ Such literature, by definition, cannot explain

changes and processes that were *cultural* rather than political in character. With the notable exception of Eva Plach's work, cultural history has, as of yet, had virtually no impact on the study of interwar Poland.²¹

Since Piłsudski, who emerged as Poland's unquestioned ruler after 1926, forcefully rejected political anti-Semitism, the latter's expansion took place below the level of high politics and, in many ways, despite the policies of the state. Clearly, political history is poorly equipped to analyze this problem and, as a result, the entire question of the rise of "ethnic" Polish nationalism and anti-Semitism in the interwar period has been poorly theorized.²² The literature on the subjects of nationalism and anti-Semitism in interwar Poland is divided into two rather old fashioned and scholarly isolated fields.²³ On the one hand, is the literature seeking to explain Polish anti-Semitism in terms of socioeconomic structures.²⁴ The majority of scholars in this camp basically agree with contemporary observers, who saw the enmity between Polish and Jewish communities as being conditioned by and functionally inscribed into the class and ethno-religious structures of interwar Polish society, wherein the Jews comprised a disproportionately large part of the Polish middle class.

For example, according to William Hagen, anti-Semitism "emerged where entrepreneurial or professional groups among the Christian population, eager to reap the rewards of capitalist modernization, faced competition posed by strong and entrenched Jewish positions."²⁵ Obviously, the particularities of Poland's Jewish community cannot be dismissed when explaining Polish anti-Semitism. With over 3 million Jews,

representing over 10% of the state's inhabitants, Poland had the world's second largest Jewish community in absolute terms and by far the largest in terms of percentage of population. Moreover, while the vast majority of Poland's Jewish community was poor and almost entirely unacculturated, Jews also made up a disproportionately large number of university graduates, teachers, lawyers, physicians, and other professionals, and played an even more disproportionate role in commerce.²⁶ While these facts could indeed lead the emerging Polish Christian middle classes to view their Jewish competitors as a threat, they do not tell the whole story. The notion of a structural incongruity between "Polish" and "Jewish" interests presupposes the existence of two impermeable, monolithic communities which have their own separate, clearly defined, and unitary interests.²⁷ But, as we will see, the idea of a Polish identity which would welcome Jews *as Poles* was still alive and well in the interwar period.

Perhaps more importantly, socioeconomic explanations of anti-Semitism in Poland ignore the transnational context of the phenomenon. In the interwar period, anti-Semitism was on the rise throughout the world and particularly (though certainly not exclusively) so in central and eastern Europe.²⁸ To be sure, it affected Romania, where the structure of the Jewish community was somewhat similar to that of Poland. But it was even more powerful in Hungary, where the Jewish community was smaller and almost entirely acculturated. Most obviously, political anti-Semitism reached its most extreme forms in Germany, a country where the Jewish community numbered less than 1% of the overall population and where the kinds of "structural incongruities" which were present in Poland simply did not exist.²⁹ As Ezra Mendelsohn writes in the conclusion of his

comparative survey of Jewish communities in eastern Europe, “what the Jews did ... had little impact on attitudes and policies towards them.”³⁰ Indeed, if we were to accept a structural explanation for anti-Semitism, we would have to first explain why the Polish government held out against the transnational current of anti-Semitism sweeping central and eastern Europe for a relatively long time, rather than being a leader in the field.

The final problem with structuralist accounts of Polish anti-Semitism is that they are generally rooted in the outdated paradigm of modernization theory, which assumes that “progress” is both linear and fully coterminous with the Western values of the Enlightenment. In this scheme, east Europeans emerge as the Westerners’ backward cousins, while anti-Semitism and nationalism are seen as symptoms of the formers’ backwardness and refusal to accept superior Western values and notions of progress.³¹ Not surprisingly, the authors who resort to employing this meta-narrative, ignore the specifics of Polish history which, in reality, is infinitely more complicated than modernization theory assumes.³² At worst, their accounts tend to reify and essentialize Polish anti-Semitism and even to portray it as an integral part of Polish culture and identity.

In a variation of the “modernization theory” argument, a number of popular books have linked anti-Semitism to traditional Catholicism.³³ Yet, while it is certainly true that Catholicism and anti-Semitism in interwar Poland “coexisted in mutually formative ways,” anti-Semitism also affected many non-Catholic Western countries.³⁴ Thus, as Brian Porter-Szűcs writes “any attempt to identify anti-Semitism in general or Catholic anti-

Semitism in particular, as a product of some imagined East European ‘backwardness’ is as much a distortion as the efforts of some to claim that Poland was entirely free of this ideological blight.”³⁵

The second body of literature dealing with ethnic nationalism and anti-Semitism in interwar Poland is produced by scholars who analyze anti-Semitism as an ideology.³⁶ These studies, generally produced by Polish scholars, are most often rooted in the tradition of intellectual history, which deals with the production of primary and secondary intellectuals and the intellectual evolution of National Democratic nationalism. They are not attuned to issues of reception, and do not address the question how the latter recursively impacts intellectual production. As a result, they cannot account for broader cultural and social changes. Moreover, the intellectual histories of Polish right-wing anti-Semitic nationalism are almost entirely disconnected from the socioeconomic explanations of anti-Semitism discussed above. Other strands of Polish nationalism are almost entirely neglected, not so much because the National Democratic vision continued to gain adherents at their expense throughout the interwar period, but primarily because they were less ideological and, as a result, less easily accessible to the practitioners of traditional intellectual history.³⁷

A key problem with the paradigm of intellectual history, quite similar to the sociological explanations of anti-Semitism outlined above, is that it fails to account for change on a mass level. While it may be quite easy to explain how particular ideas within the National Democratic ideology mutated over the course of the interwar period, or how

younger followers of the *Endecja* assumed ever more radical and anti-Semitic attitudes, intellectual history cannot answer the *why* particular ideas resonated on the popular level while others failed to do so.

While many scholars look to the state as a key socializing and nationalizing agent, in this case anti-Semitic nationalism triumphed *despite* Piłsudski's control of the machinery of the state. Perhaps most puzzling is the fact that, after Piłsudski's death, his own successors, who had for the most part been his followers since the early days of the struggle for independence, and appeared to have shared his civic vision of Poland, very quickly ended up rejecting it. After 1935, they increasingly adopted the anti-Semitic and virulently nationalistic discourse of their political enemies, the National Democrats, and by 1937 openly embraced anti-Semitism.³⁸

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The goal of this project is to try to explain the victory of “ethnic” nationalism in Poland not in terms of old fashioned political or intellectual history but to conceptualize it in the context of a political, intellectual, and cultural struggle over the contested discursive field of the nation.³⁹ The events surrounding the election and murder of President Narutowicz play an important but hitherto entirely unacknowledged role in this struggle. The idea of a seemingly random contingent event playing an important role in cultural change may not be intuitive in contemporary historical scholarship and requires some deeper explanation. For centuries, of course, events had been at the very centre of history—as Blaise Pascal famously remarked, if Cleopatra's nose had “been

different the whole face of the world would have changed.”⁴⁰ And while the “Crux of Cleopatra’s Nose” view of history has come under attack from philosophers ranging from Montesquieu to Marx, in the 20th century it has come under sustained critique from professional historians.⁴¹ Skepticism regarding the role played by events in understanding historical change characterized the great French “Annales” school as well as of the “new social history” in American academia.⁴² In both schools, historical change was seen as being determined by deeper (usually socioeconomic) structures, in the face of which contingency, as well as agency, appeared to be nothing more than illusory epiphenomena.⁴³

More recently, however, both events and agency have returned to the attention of serious historians. Perhaps the most obvious manner in which the focus on a single event has been deployed to understand larger issues is microhistory.⁴⁴ Although microhistories focus on singular events or characters, and often quite marginal ones at that, they differ from mere case studies in their larger ambitions. Specifically, the practitioners of microhistory use a particular event or locale in order to interrogate grand narratives and elucidate mechanisms of causation which cannot be easily observed on a larger scale, but which are nevertheless indispensable in understanding the latter.⁴⁵ Microhistory also helps to highlight the agency of individual actors, which is often obscured when examining social or cultural change at the macro level but which inevitably comes into view when focus is shifted.⁴⁶ On this score, a closer examination of the assassination of Narutowicz can certainly help us better understand the dynamics of the discursive struggle between the Piłsudczyks and National Democrats. It is only by examining an

event up close that we can understand precisely what motivated individual actors and how grand “ideologies” were interpreted, “felt,” and enacted by actual historical agents.

Rogers Brubaker, a sociologist whose concerns appear aligned with those of micorhistorians, makes a similar case for the importance of events in studying nationalism. Specifically, he believes that a focus on events can help us both understand and de-essentialize the processes by which nationality is constructed and enacted. “Phases of extraordinary cohesion and moments of intensely felt collective solidarity,” Brubaker writes, are themselves contingent processes or events rather than fixed givens.⁴⁷ While Brubaker’s own agenda is to examine instances when high levels of “groupness” failed to crystallize despite the efforts of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs, the obverse is also true—instances of extraordinarily high in-group identification and mobilization can shed light on the mechanisms by which the identification with a particular vision of the national community is transformed and models of behavior are changed. By comparing nationalist discourse before and after an event in which nationalist passions flew high, we can try to begin to understand the potentially transformative impact of the event itself on cultural schema.⁴⁸

My own understanding of the importance of contingent events goes even further: Events not only constitute convenient analytical vantage points, but they can also profoundly *transform* social, political, and discursive structures in their own right. My claim is not simply that the election and murder of Narutowicz can offer insights into the transformation of the discursive field of nationalism in Poland, but that they were

themselves important factors in transforming the latter. In order to explain this point it is important to briefly examine the work of the historian and social theorist William Sewell. While Sewell has no desire to go back to old fashioned narrative history, he believes that the concept of a “historical event” is essential to understanding the process of structural change. More specifically, he argues that historical change occurs in spurts rather than linearly and that contingent events “transform social relations in ways that could not be fully predicted from the gradual changes that may have made them possible.”⁴⁹ In Sewell’s model, discursive structures and cultural schema, such as Polish nationalist discourse(s), generally tend to be reproduced over time and are transformed only in the face of ruptures in social relations. A historical event is defined as such on the basis of whether or not it produces such a rupture and a transformation in existing structures.

The scale of these ruptures can vary and “events,” in the sense in which Sewell uses the term, are not “things” but conceptual aids which should be defined with an eye to the problem one is studying. Sewell famously uses the case of the storming of the Bastille as the *par excellence* example of a historic event which brought about a profound cultural transformation.⁵⁰ But he readily provides examples of structural change, albeit on a smaller scale, which can be occasioned by infinitely more quotidian events:

A fight that breaks out in a neighborhood bar breaks the usual routine of sociability. If it can be resolved by the normal politics of tavern sociability - for example, by having the bouncer eject the aggressor, or by having the combatants duke it out in the back alley - it may have no serious consequences. But if, say, one of the combatants is white and the other black, the initial rupture could be amplified by a rupture in the system of race relations that also structures interactions in the bar, and this could lead to a generalized racial brawl, which could draw in the police, who

might commit acts of racial violence, which could touch off a city-wide riot, which in turn could permanently embitter race relations, discredit the mayor and police chief, and scare off private investment - and, of course, alter the mode of sociability in bars.⁵¹

Yet, critics will surely respond that the murder of Narutowicz was *not* a transformative event, even in the most prosaic way. Did the president's assassination produce a rupture in the manner in which nationalist thought and practice was reproduced? While this question has never explicitly been asked, the implicit consensus of Polish historiography is that it did not. The immediate effects of the assassination were perhaps somewhat surprising. According to political science literature, the assassination of a head of state, especially in a poorly consolidated and internally divided society such as interwar Poland, should lead "to an increase in the extent of political unrest."⁵² The murder of Narutowicz, however, had the opposite effect. Street protests immediately subsided, as politicians and journalists of all political stripes called for calm. The right, which had been so vocal in calling for the president's "removal" (at least initially) repudiated the murderer and condemned his act, while the left resisted calls for a violent retaliation.⁵³ Within eight days, a new president was elected by the National Assembly with the very same combination of votes as Narutowicz. Even though it was again the votes of the Bloc of National Minorities which tipped the scales, there were no further protests from the right. Within two weeks the murderer was tried, sentenced to death, and duly executed. And while Polish politics continued to be plagued by instability, no comparable episode of political violence occurred until Piłsudski's coup d'état in 1926.⁵⁴

Therefore, at first glance, the political and cultural impact of the murder of Narutowicz appears to have been very limited. In the literature, the assassination is generally treated as a historical footnote with little bearing on the political or cultural history of interwar Poland.⁵⁵ In fact, most historians assume that the primary effect of the murder was to temporarily embarrass or discredit the right and the National Democratic movement.⁵⁶

My argument, however, is not only that the election and murder of Narutowicz can provide a useful analytical window into the transformation of Polish nationalism, but that together they constituted a “historical event,” in the sense in which Sewell uses that term. Most importantly, the series of contingent events which catapulted the virtually unknown Narutowicz to the presidency with the aid of the National Minorities’ Bloc resulted in the most explicit and sustained press debate regarding the meaning or “content” of national identity, and the proper place of national minorities within the “imagined community” of the Polish nation, ever to take place in the interwar period. This discussion led the right to explicitly formulate what immediately became known as the “Doctrine of the Polish Majority,” which stated that only “ethnic Poles” had the right to rule Poland. In return, the left put forth a forceful counter-narrative which emphasized citizenship and culture at the expense of ethnicity.

Intuitively, we might expect that the violence perpetrated by the right-wing champions of exclusive “ethnic” nationalism, which culminated with the President’s murder, would discredit this conception in the eyes of many Poles. In fact, however, the very opposite appears to have happened. While examples of candid, robust, and

sophisticated attempts to defend the principles of a civic conception of the Polish state and nation can be found in the left-wing press in the interlude between the parliamentary and presidential elections, they virtually disappeared after the election of Narutowicz and the outbreak of violence which immediately followed it. For reasons which will be discussed, in the aftermath of the murder, the left appears to have tacitly surrendered to the Doctrine of the Polish Majority. Left-wing and centrist politicians ceased to publicly challenge the principles of “ethnic” nationalism and muted their critiques of anti-Semitism. Even more tellingly, they appeared to be doing everything in their power to distance themselves from the election of Narutowicz and from any association with the Minorities’ Bloc and the Jews. Therefore, despite the fact that both the left and the right (for different reasons) did their best to forget the events surrounding the election and murder of President Narutowicz, the latter had a profound, lasting, and transformative impact on the manner in which national identity was discussed in the public sphere. This dissertation is an attempt to tell the story of how and why this happened.

¹ “Manifestacje z powodu rezultatu wyborów,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 10, 1922.

² “Zajścia uliczne,” *Kurjer Polski*, December 12, 1922.

³ “Manifestacje z powodu rezultatu wyborów,” *Gazeta Warszawska*.

⁴ For example, see Piotr Wróbel, “Polacy, Żydzi i odbudowa Polski na stronach The New York Timesa w 1918 r.,” in *Rozdział wspólnej historii: studia z dziejów Żydów w Polsce ofiarowane profesorowi Jerzemu Tomaszewskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by Jolanta Żyndul (Warszawa: Cyklady, 2001), 181–198.

⁵ Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 58.

⁶ See Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷ See Joshua D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia, 1892-1914* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

⁸ The literal translation of *Lewica Niepodległościowa* would be Independence or Pro-Independence Left. The term *niepodległościowa* (pro-independence) was meant to distinguish leftist patriots from Communists and internationalist socialists, who did not believe that the independence of Poland was an important objective. I have taken the liberty to use the term “Patriotic Left” because it is much less awkward in English than the literal translation but still fully captures the latter’s spirit.

⁹ Stanisław Mackiewicz, *Historja Polski od 11 listopada 1918 r. do 17 września 1939 r.* (London: M.I. Kolin, 1941), 34.

¹⁰ Jerzy Giedroyc, “Droga na wschód,” *Więź* 10 (1989).

¹¹ Robert Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 188.

¹² For example, Antony Polonsky writes that “Polish political life in the 1920s was still to a great extent overshadowed by the increasingly anachronistic conflict between the National Democrats and the followers of Piłsudski, a conflict over tactics and orientation which had arisen in 1914 and dominated the course of Polish politics during World War I.” Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland 1921-1939: The Crisis of Constitutional Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 53.

¹³ Jan Molenda, *Piłsudzczyca i Narodowi Demokraci 1908-1918* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1980), 7.

¹⁴ In civic nationalism, usually identified with the French tradition of statehood, the nation constitutes a common political space, defined around a set of institutions, values and political projects. Conversely, ethnic or *volkish* nationalism, which has its roots in German political thought, imagines a primordial nation based on (some combination of) shared ancestry, language, culture, and religion. While broad categories such as civic and ethnic are often overly simplistic, Genevieve Zubrzycki has argued for their utility, if they are not used not as descriptions of an empirical reality but as ideal types, in the Weberian sense. In other words, the point is not to “categorize” reality but to use ideal-type categories in order to highlight particular dimensions of an infinitely complex social world. Furthermore, as Zubrzycki argues, one of the key areas in which the civic/ethnic distinction can be utilized without becoming normativized is precisely in problematizing individual nationalist traditions, rather than making comparisons between nationalisms. For more on this question see Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Nicholas Xenos, “Civic Nationalism: Oxymoron,” *Critical Review* 10, no. 2 (1996): 213–231; Geneviève Zubrzycki, “The Classical Opposition Between Civic and Ethnic Models of Nationhood: Ideology, Empirical Reality and Social Scientific Analysis,” *Polish Sociological Review* 3(139) (2002): 275–295.

¹⁵ The question of struggles *within* particular nationalist traditions or discourses has resulted in some of the most interesting work in the field. Prasenjit Duara follows the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in characterizing nationalism not as a monolithic ideology but

a polyphonic field in which competing visions, articulations, and discourses of the nation coexist and battle for hegemony. As Duara puts it, “the multiplicity of nation-views and the idea that political identity is not fixed but shifts between different loci introduces the idea that nationalism is best seen as a relational identity.” Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁶As the critic Konstanty Jeleński writes, the “chasm” which divided the National Democrats from their enemies transcended “the plane of politics” and involved the realm of “emotions.” Konstanty A. Jeleński, *“Kultura:” Polska na wygnaniu* (Warszawa: Instytut Dokumentacji i Studiów nad Literaturą Polską, 2005), 17.

¹⁷ Henry Morgenthau, *All in a life-time* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1922), 358.

¹⁸ Czesław Miłosz describes the anti-Semitism of the late 1930s as bordering on “psychosis,” while Michael Steinlauf writes, perhaps with some exaggeration, that by the 1930s “Polish anti-Semitism had achieved levels unparalleled anywhere save for Nazi Germany.” Czesław Miłosz, *Wyprawa w dwudziestolecie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1999), 273. Michael Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, *Modern Jewish History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 22.

¹⁹ For example see Oskar Halecki, *Historia Polski* (Lublin: Veritas, 1992), 272.

²⁰ Some representative works on interwar Poland are the following: Jan M. Ciechanowski, *O genezie i upadku II Rzeczypospolitej* (London: Odnova, 1981); Antoni Czubiński, *Spory o II Rzeczpospolitą: ewolucja poglądów publicystyki i historiografii polskiej na temat przyczyn odbudowy i znaczenia niepodległego państwa dla narodu polskiego* (Poznań: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1983); Marian Marek Drozdowski, *Spółczesność, państwo, politycy II Rzeczypospolitej: szkice i polemiki* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972); Marian Eckert, *Historia Polski, 1914-1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1990); Andrzej Garlicki, *Pierwsze lata Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1989); Aleksandra Nowak et al., *Druga Rzeczpospolita 1918-1939* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1978); Janusz Pajewski, *Budowa Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej, 1918-1926* (Kraków: Nakł. Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności, 1995); Richard M. Watt, *Bitter Glory: Poland and Its Fate, 1918 to 1939* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Timothy J. Wiles and Bloomington., *Poland Between the Wars, 1918-1939* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Polish Studies Center, 1989).

²¹ Andrzej Chojnowski and Piotr Wróbel made this point over twenty years ago but, with the notable exception of Eva Plach’s work, it remains true today. By cultural history I refer to work rooted in the understanding that our linguistic and conceptual universes are not trans-historical givens, but the historically generated products of particular and unique cultures, which are reflected, but also contested, negotiated, and transformed, in the public sphere. See Andrzej Chojnowski and Piotr Wróbel, eds., *Prezydenci i Premierzy Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1992), 5–6; Eva Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Piłsudski’s Poland, 1926-1935* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006).

²² Ezra Mendelsohn, “Jewish Historiography on Polish Jewery,” in *Jews in Independent Poland, 1918-1939*, ed. by Antony Polonsky, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Jerzy Tomaszewski, Polin 8 (London: Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies, 1994), 4–5.

²³ While a novel approach to the study of nationalism and anti-Semitism in the 19th century was showcased in Brian Porter’s *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, no work on the interwar period has followed Porter’s methodology. It is a testimony to the dearth of literature on this subject that out of the fifteen articles found in the edited volume *Anti-Semitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland*, only three deal with the interwar period despite the fact that it constituted the highpoint of anti-Semitism in Poland. See Robert Blobaum, ed., *Anti-Semitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

²⁴ For example see William W. Hagen, “Before the ‘Final Solution’: Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Anti-Semitism in Interwar Germany and Poland,” *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (June 1996): 351–381; Hillel Levine, *Economic Origins of Anti-Semitism: Poland and Its Jews in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983).

²⁵ William W. Hagen, “Before the ‘Final Solution,’” 380. Similarly, Joseph Marcus locates the causes of Polish hatred towards the Jews in the “fact [that] the economic interests of the Jews and the rest of the population [of Poland] were structurally incongruous.” Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland*, 233.

²⁶ See stats in Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland*.

²⁷ But why, we should ask, would a strong Jewish middle class *not* be in the interests of Polish society as a whole? To assume that this was “naturally” so, is based on the implicit assumption that Jews were not and could not be Poles—as such it replicates the argument made by the anti-Semites themselves. Such a claim is also demonstratively false. Many thoughtful and influential Poles and Jews in interwar Poland posed this question. Many, including both Polish patriots like Józef Piłsudski and Zionists like Apolinary Hartglas, believed that a strong Jewish middle class could be fully compatible with the interests of the Polish state and nation. It is true that many others, both Poles and Jews, believed the two communities to be entirely separate and their interests to be mutually exclusive. These different answers depended primarily on the meanings one ascribed to seemingly commonsense terms like “Polish society” or “Jews.” While many historians have taken particular definitions of these terms for granted, it is important there are were in fact no “objective” definitions—they were all mediated by culture and, at times, the subject of intense debate. And, of course, culture itself is not static.

²⁸ In 1922, at the same time as *numerus clausis* initiatives were being eagerly discussed in Poland, Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell proposed to introduce Jewish quotas at America’s best university. His proposal was eventually rejected only to be replaced with a less explicitly anti-Semitic plan to restrict enrollment from cities and accept more applicants from rural areas and Western states, which was obviously intended to serve the same purpose.

²⁹ Romania's Jewish community numbered some 4.2% of the population, yet a strong tradition of anti-Semitic government policy existed well before 1918. In Hungary, the Jews represented about 5% of the population and were almost entirely acculturated, but this did not prevent the government from instituting a *numerus clausis* law as early as 1920. The most obvious example, however, is Germany, where the Jews made up a tiny and "structurally" insignificant minority of less than 1%, which did not prevent the Nazis from coming to power preaching the gospel of anti-Semitism. In contrast no anti-Semitic measures were enacted in Poland until after 1937, despite the country's (mostly unacculturated) Jewish population exceeding 10% of the entire population and forming minorities of over 30% in many cities. See Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 94–99, 172–175.

³⁰ Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 256.

³¹ See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

³² For a comprehensive review of this literature see Mendelsohn, "Jewish Historiography on Polish Jewery." The most representative works of this kind of approach are Levine, *Economic Origins of Antisemitism*; Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland*. More recent works on antisemitism which deal (at least in part) with the interwar period, and which avoid the pitfall of essentialism, include the following: Magdalena Opalski and Israel Bartal, *Poles and Jews: A Failed Brotherhood* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992); Blobaum, *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*. However, neither of the latter two works attempts to systematically explain the growth of anti-Semitism in interwar Poland.

³³ See David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001); Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

³⁴ Today, unfortunately, anti-Semitism is most at home in the Muslim world.

³⁵ Brian Porter, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 273.

³⁶ Bogumił Grott, *Nacjonalizm chrześcijański: myśl społeczno-państwowa formacji narodowo-katolickiej w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Kraków: Tow. Autorów i Wydawców Prac Nauk. "Universitas", 1991); Jerzy Jedlicki, *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują: studia z dziejów idei i wyobraźni XIX wieku* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1988); Ewa Maj, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy 1919-1928: Studium z dziejów myśli politycznej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2000); Włodzimierz Mich, *Obcy w polskim domu: nacjonalistyczne koncepcje rozwiązania problemu mniejszości narodowych, 1918-1939* (Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1994); Ronald Modras, "The Interwar Polish Catholic Press on the Jewish Question," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 548, no. 1 (1996): 169–190; Mieczysław Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich przed I Wojną Światową* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej im. Oskara Langego,

2007); Roman Wapiński, *Narodowa Demokracja, 1893-1939: Ze studiów nad dziejami myśli nacjonalistycznej* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1980); Roman Wapiński, *Świadomość polityczna w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Łódź: Wydawn. Łódzkie, 1989); Adam Wątor, *Działalność Związku Ludowo-Narodowego w latach 1919-1922* (Szczecin: Uniwersytet Szczeciński, 1992).

³⁷ Works dealing with the political thought of the Piłsudski camp are much fewer in number. Even more problematically, they focus on tactical questions rather than political philosophy in the proper sense of the word. See Krzysztof Budziło and Jan Pruszyński, *Dla dobra Rzeczypospolitej: antologia myśli państwowej* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Sejmowe, 1996); Andrzej Garlicki, *U źródeł obozu belwederskiego* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1978); Piotr Okulewicz, *Koncepcja "międzymorza" w myśli i praktyce politycznej obozu Józefa Piłsudskiego w latach 1918-1926* (Poznań: Wydawn. Poznańskie, 2001).

³⁸ According to Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz, the policies of the post-Piłsudski regime represent the ultimate victory of National Democratic nationalism in Polish politics. Dmowski, Mackiewicz added, became the king of the Polish conceptual horizon. Mackiewicz, *Historja Polski od 11 listopada 1918 r. do 17 września 1939 r.*, 34.

³⁹ My understanding of the term "field" in this context is conditioned by the work of Pierre Bourdieu. See especially Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 94–115.

⁴⁰ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. by Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 32.

⁴¹ Montesquieu famously wrote: "It was not Poltava that ruined Charlex [XII of Sweden]; if he had not been destroyed at that place he would have been destroyed at another. Accidents of fortune are easily rectified [but] one cannot avert events that continuously arise from the nature of things." Charles de Secondat baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. by Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Samuel Harold Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 147. According to E.H. Carr contingent events should not "enter into any rational interpretation of history, or into the historian's hierarchy of significant causes." Edward Hallett Carr, *What Is History?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), 103.

⁴² William H. Sewell, "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille," *Theory and Society* 25, no. 6 (December 1996): 841. Anne C Tedeschi, Carlo Ginzburg, and John Tedeschi, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (November 1, 1993): 13.

⁴³ Of course, this has not stopped popular writers from practicing old fashioned narrative history.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of this term see Tedeschi, Ginzburg, and Tedeschi, "Microhistory."

⁴⁵ In perhaps the most famous work of microhistory Carlo Ginzburg uses a detailed case study of a common miller whose heterodox religious beliefs land him in trouble with the Inquisition to raise entirely new insights into "the popular roots of a considerable part of high European culture, both medieval and post-medieval." Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University

Press, 1980), 126. Also see Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 108–109.

⁴⁶ On this score the practitioners of microhistory profess a normative commitment to highlight the agency of marginalized individuals and communities. While I am sympathetic to such concerns, this aspect of microhistory has no bearing on my project. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 109.

⁴⁷ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 168.

⁴⁸ By the term “discourse,” I refer to an inter-subjectively shared and taken for granted set of meanings and frames of reference, which are embedded in language and which structure our experience. While discursive formations do not necessarily *determine* our consciousness, and are often contested both from within and from outside a particular discursive community, they nevertheless create invisible boundaries between what can and cannot be talked about or even imagined within a given community of thought.

⁴⁹ Sewell, “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures,” 843.

⁵⁰ Sewell, “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures,” 861.

⁵¹ Sewell, “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures,” 843–844.

⁵² Zaryab Iqbal and Christopher Zorn, “The Political Consequences of Assassination,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 3 (June 2008): 388.

⁵³ To see this extraordinary about-face on the right, it is enough to compare the following two articles, the first published before and the second after the assassination: Stanisław Stroński, “Zawada,” *Rzeczpospolita*, December 14, 1922; Stanisław Stroński, “Ciszej nad trumną,” *Rzeczpospolita*, December 17, 1922. For the reaction on the left see Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski, 1864-1945* (Londyn: Świdorski, 1983), 606.

⁵⁴ Another bout of violence took place following a wave of strikes in Cracow in 1923. However, while the strikers also had political demands the impetus for their action was economic.

⁵⁵ For example two recent works on interwar Polish history, one in English and one in Polish, devote less than a page to the murder of Narutowicz and its impact. Marian Leczyk, *Druga Rzeczpospolita 1918-1939: Społeczeństwo, gospodarka, kultura, polityka* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “Książka i Wiedza”, 2006); Paul C. Latawski, *The Reconstruction of Poland, 1914-23* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992); The best treatment of the impact of the assassination in the context of interwar Polish politics remains: Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*.

⁵⁶ Daria Nałęcz and Tomasz Nałęcz, “Gabriel Narutowicz, prezydent Rzeczypospolitej 14XIII-16XIII 1922,” in *Prezydenci i premierzy Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. by Andrzej Chojnowski and Piotr Wróbel (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1992), 48.

CHAPTER II

Polish Nationalism(s) during the Long Nineteenth Century

Today, being Polish is so easily defined that it is often difficult to imagine how it could ever have been otherwise. As we all know, modern Poland is a country of some 38 million people, 99% of whom are ethnic Poles, who speak Polish, and consider themselves to be Poles. Since statehood, ethnicity, and political loyalty are almost entirely coextensive it may seem bizarre to distinguish between civic and ethnic modes of nationalism; indeed, one can think of few other places where civic and ethnic identities are fused so closely together. Thus, it may be easy to forget that during the period of the Partitions (1795-1918), roughly coextensive with the long nineteenth century, the precise meaning of being a Pole was by no means clear. In fact, the terms “Poland” and “Pole” could be understood in at least two different ways, neither of which was free from certain ambiguities.

The prevalent understanding of “Polishness” until the last decades of the 19th century was perhaps unique in Europe. Most west European nations, such as the French, Portuguese, or Dutch, were constructed (or “imagined” to use Anderson’s term) within “their own” states. The institutions of the state acted as nationalizing forces, which helped to create “civic” nationalist traditions, in which the state itself acted as the primary

locus of identity.¹ In most of eastern Europe, though also in Germany and Italy, the nationalist sentiment preceded the existence of national states. Thus, the primary locus of national identity was not the state, since no German, Italian or Croatian state ever existed, but the imagined community of the nation itself. This historical trajectory gave birth to so-called “ethnic” nationalism.²

Civic Nationalism and the Legacy of the Commonwealth

While modern Polish nationalism is generally perceived as a *par excellence* example of the “ethnic” type, historically speaking this is not true. Modern Polish national identity was first articulated during the last decades of the existence of the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and was explicitly framed by loyalty to that state.³ When the Commonwealth was destroyed in 1795, Polish patriotism continued on its civic trajectory.⁴ Despite the rupture constituted by the Partitions, the primary theme in Polish political thinking was one of continuity. The primary goal of the first generations of Polish patriots was not to create a state for the Polish ethnic group, but to *recreate* the Commonwealth.⁵ The seemingly self-contradictory appellation of “civic nationalism without a state,” actually makes perfect sense in the Polish case. A classical formulation of this position can be seen in the writings of the radical revolutionary leader Maurycy Mochnacki:

In all political action, it is necessary to have a philosophical foundation. That foundation, as far as the restoration of the Polish nation is concerned, is its historical past, which we can neither reject nor forget. Our task today is restitution. It is the act of national memory We are not improvising

Poland but calling the Fatherland out of the grave, digging out of the rubble an ancient structure, all of the parts of which must be gathered into a single whole⁶

To understand the subsequent evolution of Polish nationalism, it is necessary to take a closer look at this “ancient structure.” The early modern Polish Republic (*Rzeczpospolita*) was perhaps the most unusual state of early modern Europe. In particular, the Commonwealth, as it is usually known in English, had two features which are of central importance for this story. In the first place, the republican tradition of the Commonwealth became of paramount importance to subsequent generations of Polish nobles, who found themselves chafing under the yoke of autocratic Romanov, Hapsburg, and Hohenzollern dynasts. While the republicanism of the so-called “nobles’ democracy” was problematic, since it applied to only to the nobles, who constituted 10% of the population, it was its *memory* which was crucial. Indeed, according to many Poles early modern Polish republicanism, with its anti-absolutist tendencies, anticipated many features of modern democracy.⁷ Thus, a commitment to the tradition of Polish statehood was synonymous with the commitment to broadly understood liberal and democratic values. While for liberal conservatives, like Prince Adam Czartoryski, this identification of Polishness with republicanism led to the call for liberalism in internal affairs and legalism in foreign relations, radicals and romantics took these sentiments much further.⁸

Indeed, for the romantics, the historical experience of the Commonwealth’s destruction became normativized and imbued with metaphysical meaning. Having defined the Partitions as a great injustice perpetrated by neighboring autocrats upon one

of the great historical nations of Europe, the romantics came to view the quest for the restitution of Poland as synonymous with the universal quest for liberty. Thus, according to Adam Mickiewicz, the fatherland was not “some piece of land, circumscribed by boundaries, beyond which the national being and action of a Pole has its limits.” Rather, Mickiewicz continued, “the fatherland is a [just] future social order, which still has to be created.”⁹ In this formulation, Poland became identified with the universal values of freedom and justice; it assumed a metaphysical dimension and became a quest or a normative ideal rather than a social reality. And the realization of that ideal was inextricably bound up with the universal struggle for international justice and liberty.

In the later works of Mickiewicz, or those of the mystic Towiański, this idea developed into the mystical historiosophy of Messianism, perhaps the strangest and least accessible legacy of Polish Romanticism. At its heart, this millenarian doctrine assumed that the “resurrection” of the Polish state would usher in a new era of justice and morality in international relations.¹⁰ While this is hardly the place to attempt an explication of this notoriously inexplicable doctrine, the important point is to note that one of the chief concerns of Polish nationalism in the first half of the 19th century was not simply to create a state for the Polish ethnic group but, on the contrary, to usher in a new era of national self-determination and international justice for *all* peoples. This explains the prolific participation of Poles in revolutionary activities throughout Europe, and even beyond it.¹¹ In between the outbreaks of rebellion in the Polish lands, Polish soldiers fought in revolutionary struggles elsewhere—in the United States, France, Italy, and Hungary to name just a few. It also helps us understand why the Polish insurrectionaries who fought

against Russia in 1830-31 carried banners with the words “For Your Freedom and Ours” written on them in both Polish and Russian and why they believed that they were liberating the Tsar’s Russian subjects from his tyranny. The cause of liberty was to them one and the same everywhere. Bringing freedom to other peoples would ultimately bring it to Poland as well, and vice versa. “Wherever there is the struggle for freedom, there is the struggle for Poland,” wrote Mickiewicz.¹²

The concern with universal liberty went hand in hand with another unusual feature of the early modern Commonwealth, which became an important part of the struggle over the meaning of Poland in the late 19th century. The Commonwealth was a multiethnic and multicultural state which included most of what is now Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine, and in which ethnic Poles made up less than 40% of the population. But this diversity was not only a fact of life—it was also a key feature of the Commonwealth’s foundational myth. In fact, the Republic was the result of the voluntary union of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland, during which the Lithuanian nobility (many of whom were ethnically Belarusian and Ukrainian) received the same constitutional privileges which had been enjoyed by their Polish counterparts. The two founding “nations” thus became equal citizens of the new state, without the Lithuanians having to renounce their identity, ethnicity, or religion.¹³ In addition to Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, the Commonwealth also included large numbers of Germans as well as the world’s largest Jewish community. Furthermore, the religious freedom and toleration for heterodox belief practiced in the Commonwealth during the sixteenth century had become something of a point of pride for nineteenth

century Poles. In an era notorious for religious persecution, the Poland was justly seen as “a country without stakes.”¹⁴

In practice of course, ethnic and sectarian relations in the Commonwealth were often problematic. As the nobles of all ethnic backgrounds increasingly accepted Polish language and culture, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian languages became confined to the oppressed peasantry, which would later imbue class conflict with an ethnic dimension. The bloody Cossack revolts of the seventeenth century were underpinned partly by ethnic grievances. Poland’s Jewish community enjoyed almost unparalleled internal autonomy, but was treated as a special caste and was almost entirely separate from the rest of society. As the Commonwealth’s political and economic fortunes declined, the admirable toleration of the sixteenth century gave way to Catholic bigotry in the eighteenth—just as hitherto fanatical west Europeans were becoming more tolerant of diversity and dissent.

But the point here is not to discuss the complex realities of the Commonwealth, but rather how it was *remembered*. And for most 19th century Polish patriots the memory of the republican, multiethnic Commonwealth in its historical borders constituted the normative ideal for what a reconstituted Poland should look like.¹⁵ Nationhood, or being a Pole, was also defined by the historical legacy of the Commonwealth and not by ethnicity.¹⁶ For example, according to the historian and romantic nationalist Joachim Lelewel, the Polish nation consisted “of the Poles of Greater Poland, the Poles of Little Poland, Mazovians, Lithuanians, Ruthenians, and so forth,”

none of whom had any special claim on the term Polish. Even more surprisingly, considering the subsequent evolution of Polish nationalism, Lelewel considered Germans living in historical Poland to be “simply German speaking Poles.”¹⁷

In the Polish case there was no rupture between the early modern tradition of civic loyalty to the state and the stateless national movement which emerged after the state’s demise. On the question of borders, it was taken for granted that Poland would be recreated in the 1772 boundaries of the Commonwealth. The latter’s restitution was invariably the ultimate goal of the wars and “insurrections,” which shook the Polish lands in 1795, 1830, 1846, 1848, and 1863. Conditioned by the memory of the Commonwealth, the vision of the Polish nation espoused by the vast majority of patriots was civic and inclusive of all ethnicities which inhabited its former lands.¹⁸

The dramatic military failure of the last insurrection, in 1863, ushered in a profound crisis of romantic nationalism in Poland. Many thinkers, disenchanted with its utopian and unrealistic demands turned away from grandiose proclamations of universal liberty and armed struggle against the partitioning powers and, instead, articulated a much more modest “realistic” program of incremental social and economic reform in the Polish lands. This school of moderate liberals and progressives, among them Bolesław Prus, Aleksander Świętochowski, and Eliza Orzeszkowa, became known as “positivists.” Polish positivism focused on development rather than armed struggle and social realities rather than political demands. But while the legacy of the Commonwealth was never explicitly rejected by the positivists, it was certainly deemphasized.

Positivism would dominate the Polish intellectual and political scene, insofar as it is even possible to speak of the latter under repressive Russian rule, for most of the second half of the 19th century. But while the romantic insurrectionary tradition of the Polish Commonwealth certainly went underground in the aftermath of the '63 disaster, it was not dead. In fact, it would become intertwined with the socialist tradition and return to the realm of politics with a bang in the twentieth century.

Socialism, Romanticism, and Józef Piłsudski

The somewhat unlikely heir to the romantic insurrectionary tradition of Polish nationalism, which looked back to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for both legitimacy and inspiration, was the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* or PPS). While it is customary to imagine nationalist forces throughout the world as the primary, if not exclusive, champions of national independence movements, in Poland this was not the case. Founded in 1892, from its very inception, the PPS prioritized the cause of Polish independence and identified the liberty of Poland with the freedom of the working class. Following Marx, the majority of Polish socialists believed that the cause of Polish independence was also the cause of social progress.¹⁹ Both issues, at their very core, pertained to the same fundamental problem of human freedom—as such they were not contradictory but mutually reinforcing.²⁰

Indeed, PPS ideology can be seen as the synthesis of Marxist socialism and Polish romanticism. The Party's intellectual inspiration, Bolesław Limanowski, as well as

Stanisław Mendelson, its most important early leader and the author of its first program, explicitly defined the PPS as the heir of the Polish insurrectionary tradition. Since the 1850s, Limanowski stubbornly argued that “Polish socialists in partitioned Poland should first of all aim at national liberation, both as an end in itself and as a means of achieving socialism.”²¹ While he was ignored by the first Polish socialist party, the internationalist “Proletariat,” his views were eventually adopted by the PPS. According to Stanisław Mendelson, the goal of the latter was to “complete, under the banner of socialism the task which the romantic democrats were not able to finish.”²² Thus, from the very beginning, the PPS called for a recreation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in its 1772 boundaries as democratic federation.²³

Obviously, the mixture of socialism and patriotism offered by the PPS could be, and was, criticized by more orthodox Marxist socialists. According to Lenin’s 1904 diagnosis of the PPS, its program “amounted to nothing more than the offering up of the proletariat’s most vital interests on the altar of bourgeois-democratic national independence.”²⁴ Some Polish socialists agreed with Lenin’s diagnosis, and the early conflicts within the Polish socialist movement revolved largely around the question of national independence and its relationship to socialism. As early as 1893, Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland (later the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPiL) was created in order present an internationalist alternative to the PPS’ emphasis on Polish independence.²⁵ The SDKPiL argued that the demand for the recreation of a Polish state was an anachronistic, and it opted for strict internationalism. However, it remained relatively marginal and was only sporadically able

to challenge the PPS's dominance among the working class. The legally functioning Polish Social Democratic Party (PPSD), which represented Polish socialists in Galicia, unequivocally embraced the PPS program and the cause of national independence.²⁶

The assumption behind the PPS' call for the recreation of the Commonwealth was that the nationalities inhabiting its former boundaries would undoubtedly want to join a Polish-led federation, which would offer them freedom from the Tsarist autocracy.²⁷ This claim could of course be criticized as being both anachronistic and patronizing to the non-Polish ethnic groups inhabiting the lands of the old Republic. Indeed, it was increasingly coming under fire not only from nascent Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Jewish national movements but, as we shall see, from some Poles.

The curious blend of nostalgic patriotism and revolutionary socialism offered up by the PPS attracted, among others, a former Siberian exile named Józef Piłsudski, who very quickly became the party's leader and defining personality.²⁸ So much has been written about Piłsudski that it could be argued little new can be said about him.²⁹ Nonetheless, because Piłsudski would have such a powerful impact on the history of interwar Poland, and become the symbol of a very broad and diverse political movement, it is necessary to provide a brief synthetic account of his sense of "nationness."

According to the literature, and indeed to Piłsudski himself, his patriotism was reflexive rather than thought out and largely conditioned by the environment in which he was socialized as a child.³⁰ Józef Klemens Piłsudski was born in 1867 into an old noble family in the Lithuanian countryside near Vilnius. He grew up around the small town of

Zułów (Zalavas) and was educated at home in the Polish patriotic tradition of romanticism. Like the great poets Mickiewicz and Słowacki, Piłsudski grew up speaking both Polish and Belarusian, the language spoken by the majority of inhabitants in his part of historic Lithuania. Also like the two poets, he was well versed in the folklore and traditions of his multicultural region.³¹ As every Polish child knows, Adam Mickiewicz's best known patriotic epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* begins with the words "Lithuania! My fatherland!" Piłsudski's patriotism, both critics and admirers agree, was a "throwback" to that of Mickiewicz.

Polish speakers who defined themselves as Lithuanians, as Piłsudski did, could be seen as constituting a separate imagined political community or a proto-nation.³² To be a Polish speaking Lithuanian in the nineteenth century, meant to preserve the civic and political legacy of the multiethnic Grand Duchy of Lithuania (one of the two constituent parts of the Commonwealth).³³ The distinct identity of Lithuanian Poles, even of those who ostensibly rejected a Lithuanian *political* identity, was remarked upon by contemporary observers.³⁴ Piłsudski embodied this tradition of romantic and somewhat anachronistic *kresowiaczy* of the Polish-Lithuanian borderlands (*Kresy*) as well as anyone else.³⁵

As his formative experience suggests, and as his future actions would confirm, the object of Piłsudski's aspiration as a Polish patriot or nationalist, was neither the bringing together of all ethnic Poles into single national state, nor the exclusion of non-Poles, but the recreation of the old Commonwealth.³⁶ For him Poles, Belarusians, Lithuanians, and

Jews were all “sons of this soil” and future citizens. As a young socialist he hoped that a multiethnic “historic” Lithuania could be reconstituted as a multiethnic democratic state in association with Poland.³⁷ Therefore, and this is a point of crucial importance, the *political* conception of the Polish nation, framed by the memory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was by no means forgotten in the early twentieth century. This tradition evinced a surprising continuity and, paradoxically, informed the worldview and actions of one of the key “creators” of modern Poland and, to a large extent, the nationality agenda of the Polish socialist movement. For Piłsudski, this continuity was clear:

I wanted to awaken the [multiethnic] tradition of this land. This tradition was suppressed but it still existed. Its core was the existence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the days of the old Republic [and] it reflected the rule of the Republic on these lands. Everyone had to respect this tradition.³⁸

For Piłsudski, the program articulated by the PPS represented the fulfillment of his own synthesis of Polish romanticism and the broader dedication to liberty promised by the socialist movement. Upon returning from exile, Piłsudski wrote, he was relieved to find that the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) had arrived at the same synthesis.³⁹ “In the current conditions,” he wrote in 1902, the “the most noble patriotism must necessarily lead us under the red banner of socialism.”⁴⁰

The relationship between Piłsudski and the PPS would grow more complicated in later years, but this should not raise into question the historical importance of the latter as the most important force fighting for Polish independence in the last years of the 19th century. In the future, former PPS activist would form the nucleus of a larger and more nebulous political formation—the aforementioned *Lewica Niepodległościowa* or Patriotic

Left. This broad umbrella grouping included other parties, informal networks, paramilitary formations, and independent political figures. Not all of these groups could necessarily be described as “socialist,” but the vast majority had their intellectual or organizational roots in the PPS, and shared many elements of its program.

It is easy to interpret Piłsudski’s emphasis on the equality of the nations inhabiting the Commonwealth as either empty phraseology aimed at scoring easy political points or, worse, a smokescreen for Polish imperialism. But this would be an error. According to Joshua Zimmerman, “contrary to the consensus of Jewish historiography, which claims that the PPS had no particular interest in matters particular to the Jewish worker, the party’s leader, Józef Piłsudski, placed great emphasis on winning over the Russified Jewish intelligentsia [in Lithuania] and Jewish workers.”⁴¹ Specifically, as early as 1893 Piłsudski helped facilitate the transport of Yiddish socialist publications from Galicia to Lithuania. He also “forged a link between Jewish socialists in Galicia and Jewish Social Democrats in Vilna” and “entered into a friendship with Arkadii Kremer.” Eventually, he went so far as to smuggle Yiddish publications from the US, written in Yiddish by his Polish Jewish contacts there especially for Jewish Lithuanian readers, into Lithuania.⁴²

These actions are all the more impressive given the very meager resources available to the PPS in its early days, as well as the risks of getting caught by the Russian authorities and the draconian punishments meted out. Thus, while it is customary to think of the Polish national movement as being preoccupied with excluding the Jews from the Polish nation, and even as defining “Polishness” in opposition to “Jewishness,” leaders

of the key branches of the Polish independence movement not only accepted the Jews into an inclusive and broadly defined Polish nation, but actually went out of their way to reach out to them. The same was true, to an even greater extent, with regards to Belarusian and Lithuanian inhabitants of the Old Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The heritage of this leftist patriotism is often forgotten, largely because the National Democratic right has largely been so successful in monopolizing the discourse of the nation in the interwar period. However, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries it was the PPS, with its inclusive civic patriotism conditioned by the historical legacy of the Commonwealth, which stood at the forefront of the Polish independence movement.⁴³

Ethnic Nationalism and the National Democrats

The development of right-wing, mass based, “ethnic,” anti-Semitic Polish nationalism, and the demise of its older leftist “civic” counterpart rooted in the traditions of the Commonwealth’s nobility, is often seen as an inevitable result of modernization, democratization, and the development of mass politics. While National Democratic ideology evolved in response to the broader intellectual currents of modernization, for the first two decades of its existence the movement was largely confined to a relatively narrow elite of intellectuals, and had little impact on the “masses.” And there was nothing inevitable about its development and eventual triumph—rather it reflected the active ideological choices formulated made by particular political actors in response to specific intellectual influences and contingent political events.

By far, the most influential National Democratic ideologue was Roman Dmowski. And although neither he nor the movement he led were ever able to seize power in Poland, their influence upon the country's political culture and identity were enormous. As one insightful observer wrote, "the youth of the Second Republic were raised by Dmowski."⁴⁴ It is therefore important to very briefly examine the life Dmowski which, Antony Polonsky writes, was "almost the diametrical opposite" of that of Piłsudski.⁴⁵ The man who would later raise the youth of interwar Poland was raised in a poor and poorly educated working class family in the small town of Kamionek, in ethnically homogenous central Poland. Whereas for Piłsudski memories of the Commonwealth and of the failed insurrections were a living tradition preserved in his family and milieu, Dmowski was not raised in an overtly patriotic atmosphere. However, according to his biographers, Dmowski's social conservatism, anti-Semitism, and anti-German sentiments, which later became theoretical commitments of the National Democratic movement, can be partly attributed to his youthful influences.⁴⁶ His youth was unremarkable and, unlike Piłsudski, he did not see the January Insurrection or become politicized as a child. He developed an interest in politics and the national cause only in middle school, as a reaction against the Russified education system.

In 1886, Dmowski began studying biology at the University of Warsaw, which is significant because his understanding of the nation would owe much to quasi-biological Social Darwinist theories. In 1890, he started working with *Głos*, a journal expressing the views of a new generation of Poles. This generation, known as the *niepokorni* (the unbowed), which also included Piłsudski and many key figures of the PPS, was too young

to have personally experienced the failure of the January Uprising of 1863, and espoused a more radical brand of politics than their largely “Positivist” parents.⁴⁷ *Głos* was radical, oppositional to Russian rule, but at this stage generally open to diverse ideological orientations. Dmowski also became active in the Union of Polish Youth (*Związek Młodzieży Polskiej* better known as *Zet*), a secret student organization, and the Polish League (*Liga Polska*) a secret organization run by Polish émigrés in Switzerland.

Working closely with two other important National Democratic thinkers, Zygmunt Balicki and Ludwik Popławski, in 1893 Dmowski staged a coup which effectively took the leadership of the Polish League out of the hands of the Swiss émigrés, whose political roots went back to the insurrection of 1863, and transferred them to a new Central Committee, headed by Dmowski himself. The Committee proceeded to rename the organization, which henceforth became the National League, and provided it with a centralized and hierarchical structure. The new organization’s political profile shifted markedly. The League rejected the insurrectionary tradition, which the *Liga Polska* had paid lip service to, and instead proposed a more “realistic” policy of winning concessions from the partitioning governments, while building up the national awareness of the Polish masses in its own mould.

The intellectual processes which made the development of Dmowski’s “modern” and “realistic” nationalism possible can ultimately be traced to west European influences and, most specifically, the acceptance of Social Darwinism and the loss of faith in historical progress, which had sustained earlier Polish patriots. Romantics, “Positivists,”

and Socialists had all believed that they were on the right side in the historical struggle between the forces of progress and reaction, and that time would eventually bring about both national independence for the Poles and universal social justice for all peoples.⁴⁸ The move away from earlier tradition was gradual. As late as the 1880s, the group around *Głos* cooperated with socialists, advocated the liberation of the oppressed masses, eschewed anti-Semitism and ethnic hatred, and assumed a progressive, or even radical, stance on most social issues.

In the last decade of the 19th century, however, the faith in historical progress was shaken. The discovery of the Darwinian philosophy of struggle between organisms and communities and the belief in the survival of the fittest led Dmowski, Balicki, and Popławski to question what appeared to be “unrealistic” or “utopian” aspects of Polish patriotism. Casting aside the old patriotic slogan of “For Your Freedom and Ours,” which continued to animate the PPS, they came to see the world as “plagued by an unending war of all-against-all,” in which weaker communities and social organisms were destroyed and only the strong survived.⁴⁹ Given this diagnosis, Dmowski’s goal became to ensure that the Poles would be among the winners rather than the losers of history, which had no meaning or transcendence and was ruled by little more than brute force. As Dmowski wrote in his 1904 masterpiece, *Thoughts of a Modern Pole*:

Even though we see throughout human history that the space taken up by particular peoples is in a constant flux ... and that national territory nowhere possesses steady borders delineated by Providence, but rather depends on the dynamism of the nation and its ability to expand, and that based on this ability some nations grow, while others shrink and even die, we [the Poles] imagine some stable boundaries between nations which no

one should be allowed to cross either through [conquest or assimilation] and we base our plans for the future on the fact that these boundaries will one day be recognized as being sacred.⁵⁰

In other words, based on a radically different understanding of history, Dmowski was effectively standing Mickiewicz on his head. Whereas for the latter the very meaning of being Polish was intimately bound up with the struggle for universal justice and the creation of a just order of (European) nations, for Dmowski the very opposite was true. To be a “good” and “modern” Pole, one had to fundamentally reassess the value of Polish culture and identity, reject pointless “ethicisim,” and learn to be strong and ruthless like the Prussians, whom Dmowski both hated and admired.⁵¹ In response to this diagnosis of history, the very meaning of being Polish changed. As noted earlier, for the Patriotic Left, being Polish meant the commitment to the idea of a Polish state. For Balicki, Popławski, and Dmowski, the Polish nation became a sociologically defined organism composed of “ethnic Poles.”

It may seem paradoxical, but despite its apparent focus on the fixed notion of “ethnicity,” this biologically inspired vision offered transcendence and meaning; in fact, for the National Democrats, the national community was the only source of transcendence. At this point, even the “realistic” Dmowski descended into what could only be called quasi-sociological mysticism:

Patriotism is not a philosophical system [...] it is the relationship of the individual to society [...]. We are gradually becoming ever more a society in the higher, modern meaning of that word; the internal bonds are increasingly tight, uniting us in a cohesive whole—bonds which in

themselves are not voluntary but result from a system of social relations, from the dependence of the individual upon the whole; [these bonds are] therefore more certain, more durable, less dependent upon momentary intellectual atmospheres.⁵²

What did it mean to be united into a “cohesive whole” as a “result of social relations?”

This quasi-mystical neo-romantic aspect of the nation, which meshed uneasily with the “scientific” vision articulated by Dmowski, opened up the nation to a certain amount of social constructivism. Thus, non-Polish ethnic groups could form an organic “bond” with the nation, once their moral universe became subordinated to the national interest.

Ukrainians and Belarusians, for example, represented “raw ethnic material,” from which according to Dmowski, Poles could be fashioned. Initially, Jews could also join the nation, though only in small numbers.⁵³ Conversely, others, who *were* ethnically Polish could be excluded, if their behavior went against the interests of the national community.⁵⁴ The common denominator was that it was the National Democrats themselves who decided who could and who couldn’t join the nation. Their definitions changed in response to specific historical circumstances, including contingent events.

The practical result of these theoretical musings was that Dmowski’s Poland was a state that was to be created for the Polish nation, understood as an ethnic group which was locked into a zero-sum game of survival with other similar groups. This view demanded internal solidarity within the nation, and unity against threatening “others.”⁵⁵ While Dmowski certainly recognized that nationality is to a large extent socially constructed, he nevertheless believed that ethnicity was the foundation upon which national unity and strength would be built.⁵⁶ Poland, then, was to be a state “for the

Poles,” and all who refused to assimilate and become Poles were construed as enemies. Moreover, some groups, like the Jews, were eventually defined as eternally alien and denied the opportunity to become Poles altogether. The old ethos of messianic universalism, which had animated the mainstream of the Polish national movement for almost a century, was ridiculed and explicitly rejected in favor of its very opposite—national egoism.

It was this view of the nation and its goals, which largely dictated the National Democrats’ strategic and tactical stand with regards to the question of national independence. Polish statehood was certainly important to the National Democrats, but even more important was the cultural and economic development of the nation, which could proceed without independence and was not to be sacrificed for the latter’s sake. It was largely for this reason that Dmowski would eventually come to see the Jews, who supposedly held back the development of the Polish middle class, as a bigger threat to Poland than the Russian, German, and Austrian Partitioning Powers, and why he saw the Germans as more threatening than the Russians. However, while the conclusion that the Jews constituted the *main* threat to the Polish nation may have been implicit in the National Democrats’ ideological premises, it was not a given. In his early works, Dmowski devoted relatively little space and attention to the Jewish question. However, while the *ideas* behind the National Democratic movement changed little from its inception and the fall of the Second Republic in 1939, their practical emphasis would undergo a profound transformation and radicalization, with the Jews figuring ever more prominently on the movements’ list of enemies. To understand this process, it is

important to look at specific events which played an important role in developing Dmowski's and other senior National Democrats' *weltanschauung*.

The Imagined Community and the Masses

But before proceeding, it is important to remember that the divergent ways of thinking and feeling about the nation discussed above were, until the early 20th century, confined largely to the narrow elite of the nobility and intelligentsia, which constituted little more than 10% of the population of Poland. In fact, bringing national struggle to the masses had been a problem for the Polish national movement from the moment of its inception. Despite all the efforts dedicated to addressing the "peasant question" by radical noble revolutionaries like Tadeusz Kościuszko, the insurrections of 1795, 1830, 1846, 1848, and 1863, were for the most part the work of the nobility. The peasants, who constituted the vast majority of the Polish speaking population well into the 20th century, had only a vague notion of their own "national" identity.⁵⁷ With a few notable exceptions, for most of the 19th century their reactions to the "national cause" were rather unpromising.

There were two main reasons for this. First, the patriotic movement was led by representatives of the landowning nobility, who had for centuries exploited the peasants through the institution of serfdom. Even after the abolition of serfdom, class antagonisms between the manor house and the peasant hut persisted. This was especially true in Russian Poland, where serfdom remained in place until after the fall of the Insurrection of 1861. This identification of the Polish cause with the nobility and the legacy serfdom could

be, and was, encouraged by the governments of the partitioning powers. In the 1846 insurrections, Polish speaking peasants sided with the Hapsburgs and actively fought “the Poles,” killing some 1,000 nobles and insurrectionaries. The peasant leader, Jakub Szela, was given a freehold farm in Bukovina in return for his services by the Imperial Government.

A deeper reason for the confinement of patriotism and the quest for national independence to the upper echelons of society was the fact that throughout the 19th century, the peasants of the Polish lands remained rooted in the traditional life-world of the village, where identities were local, religious, or dynastic. Only in the second half of the 19th century did that world come into sustained contact with the modern world of states, nations, and ideologies.⁵⁸ While there may be some exaggeration in the thesis that nationalism is an entirely modern development, it is nevertheless true that the identification of individuals with an imagined community such as “the nation,” required a cluster of preconditions which simply were not present among the peasant masses in the Polish lands until the late 19th century.⁵⁹

While the imagined community of the nation had older roots in Poland than in most European countries, the entry of the masses into that community was, like everywhere else, tied to socioeconomic modernization. The discursive struggle which took place between the civic and ethnic visions of Polish identity, or between the National Democrats and the Patriotic Left, must be understood in this broader context. In Russian Poland (also known as the Congress Kingdom), the demographic and cultural

core of the Polish lands, industrialization and modernization began much later than in western or even central Europe but, starting in the last quarter of the 19th century, proceeded at a breakneck pace. Economic development was spurred by the development of railways and new protectionist policies implemented by the Russian government, which increased the competitiveness of Polish industry in central Russian markets. Between 1878 and 1886, the production of steel in the Congress Kingdom rose from 18,000 to 128,000 tons.⁶⁰ Between 1850 and 1919, the population of Prussian Poland rose by 61%, Galicia by 85%, and the Russian Congress Kingdom by 173%.⁶¹ Urbanization proceeded at an even faster rate; between 1865 and 1897, the demographic growth of Russian Poland amounted to 77%, while urban population increased by 131%.⁶²

These changes disrupted traditional life and created a great amount of dislocation, fear, and anxiety. Liberal “Positivists,” like Bolesław Prus or Eliza Orzeszkowa, were optimistic about the long-term liberating possibilities of economic progress for the peasant masses. For many other thinkers, however, the destructive aspects of soulless, mechanistic modernization overwhelmed whatever benefits it may have had to offer.⁶³ The subjective experience of the negative side of this great transformation, which the statistics presented above fail to capture, is vividly depicted in the literature of this period, such as in Władysław Reymont's novel *The Promised Land*, which paints a starkly negative image of the city of Łódź in the early stages of industrialization. But along with the dislocation came the opening up of new political horizons and identities. As they moved from villages to cities and became workers, peasants confronted new social problems and political realities, and came into contact with a new ideas and modes of

thinking. They also became aware of new ways in which they could define themselves. And, in return, they brought these new modes of acting and thinking back to the villages.

The scenario briefly outlined above should be familiar to students of the so-called process of “modernization.” There can be little doubt that throughout the world socioeconomic modernization was closely correlated with the adoption of new ideologies and new politically salient identities by the masses. However, socioeconomic modernization, in and of itself, tells us little about the precise *content* of the identities in question. Insofar as scholars pay attention to the content of political identities, they generally distinguish between those based on class, which are seen as “legitimate” or “real,” and those based on ethnicity, which are supposedly “invented.”⁶⁴ Until the relatively recent work of scholars like Prasenjit Duara, relatively little attention has been paid to the differences *within* the discursive fields of particular nationalisms or national identities. According to Gellner, while modernization preconditioned the masses for the adoption of *some* kind of nationalism, the latter’s precise content was ultimately irrelevant.⁶⁵

In this work, I will present the argument that in the Polish case, the content of the emerging discourse of the nation was fiercely contested, as various political actors attempted to get the masses to accept their own conceptions of the national community. Moreover, the *circumstances* in which the “entry of the masses” onto the stage of national history occurred in Poland were themselves constitutive of the content of nationalist discourse.

The entry of the masses into politics in Poland occurred during the revolution which swept the Russian-ruled Congress Kingdom in 1905. The revolution was a transformative event in the full sense of William Sewell's usage of that word. "It was an extraordinary time, [which] could be described as the entry of the popular masses into national life," wrote Stanisław Kozicki, an important National Democratic politician.⁶⁶ While the events of 1905 in the Polish lands have been eclipsed in historical scholarship by the concurrent and related revolution in the core of the Russian Empire, in terms of mass mobilization the events in Congress Kingdom were actually *more* revolutionary than in the Russian core.⁶⁷ The revolution can be said to have started when protests against the 1904 Russo-Japanese war organized by the PPS were dispersed by Russian troops. However, it unleashed forces far beyond the control and even influence of the PPS or, indeed, of any other of Poland's fledgling political organizations.

The flames of the revolution were fed by widespread anti-government sentiment, motivated by a multitude of factors and ideologies, ranging from opposition to military mobilization to economic grievances, and from Polish nationalism to internationalist socialism. This unprecedented political mobilization, which was the effective fulfillment of a hundred years' worth of Polish revolutionaries' dreams, marks the true beginning of mass politics in Poland. According to Robert Blobaum, "the most striking political development of the revolution was the popular political participation, reflected in the emergence and rapid growth of organizations claiming to represent the interests of mass constituencies."⁶⁸ It was only as result of the revolution that both the PPS and National Democratic Party became mass parties. However, the revolution not only gave these

parties mass following; it also profoundly affected the way in which both their leaders and followers would define and understand the national community.

¹ Eric Hobsbawm writes: “The original revolutionary-popular idea of patriotism was state-based rather than nationalist, since it related to the sovereign people itself, ie. to the state exercising power in its own name.” E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 87.

² For a discussion of the term civic and ethnic see the Introduction.

³ See Paul Brykczynski, “Prince Adam Czartoryski as a Liminal Figure in the Development of Modern Nationalism in Eastern Europe at the Turn of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Nationalities Papers* 38, no. 5 (2010): 647–669.

⁴ Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 15–42; Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 20–26.

⁵ Joachim Lelewel, *Polska odradzająca się czyli dzieje polskie od roku 1795 potocznie opowiedziane* (Brussels: P.J. Voglet, 1836), 8–9.

⁶ Maurycy Mochnacki, *Maurycego Mochnackiego pisma rozmaite* (Paris: Jelowicki i Spółka, 1836), 98–99.

⁷ While some Polish thinkers condemned the republican institutions of the old Republic, many others recognized their salutary nature. As Lelewel wrote: “The Commonwealth fell not because it had republican institutions for 500 years, but because those institutions became abused. Joachim Lelewel, “Trzy konstytucje polskie” quoted in Joachim Lelewel, *Wybór pism historycznych* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1950), 269.

⁸ See Brykczynski, “Prince Adam Czartoryski.”

⁹ Quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *Stanisław Brzozowski: drogi myśli* (Warszawa: Universitas, 2011), 337.

¹⁰ See Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1982), esp. 247–267.

¹¹ While it could be argued that Mickiewicz was “just a poet,” there is no doubt that his ideas informed explicitly political thinking. For example see the Manifesto of the Polish Democratic Society in M.B. Biskupski and James S. Pula, eds., “Manifest Towarzystwa Demokratycznego Polskiego,” in *Polish Democratic Thought from the Renaissance to the Great Migration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 210–220.

¹² Manfred Kridl et al., eds., *For Your Freedom and Ours: Polish Progressive Spirit Through the Centuries* (New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1943), ix.

¹³ The term “nation” was not understood in the modern sense, but was applied strictly to the Polish and Lithuanian nobles. The Lithuanians themselves were Roman Catholics, like the Poles. However, a large part of the Ukrainian and Belarusian *boyars* who joined the ranks of the Polish nobility were Orthodox and, later, Uniate.

¹⁴ For example see Janusz Tazbir, *Państwo bez stosów i inne szkice* (Kraków: Tow. Autorów i Wydawców Prac Nauk. Universitas, 2000).

¹⁵ Porter, *Faith and fatherland*, 211.

¹⁶ Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 20–26, 41.

¹⁷ Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism*, 382.

¹⁸ The one group explicitly excluded from the Polish nation were the Russians.

¹⁹ As we have seen in the Introduction, this view was shared by Marx himself.

²⁰ Michał Śliwa, *Polska myśl polityczna w I połowie XX wieku* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1993), 25.

²¹ Kazimiera Janina Cottam, *Boleslaw Limanowski, 1835-1935: A Study in Socialism and Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 241.

²² Cited in Waldemar Potkański, *Odrodzenie czynu niepodległościowego przez PPS w okresie rewolucji 1905 roku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2008), 22. For early PPS programs see Feliks Tych, *Polskie programy socjalistyczne 1878-1918* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1975), 243–246.

²³ The second point of the PPS program called for “the full equality of all the nationalities inhabiting the Commonwealth within the framework of a voluntary federal state.” “Szkic Programu Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej,” quoted in Tych, *Polskie programy socjalistyczne*, 253.

²⁴ Tych, *Polskie programy socjalistyczne*, 222.

²⁵ The name was awkward but significant. The party claimed to represent the Congress Kingdom and Lithuania, or in other words is the historically Polish lands of the Russian Empire. Unlike the PPS, it did not lay claim to any legitimacy in Polish lands outside the existing borders of Russia.

²⁶ Jerzy Holzer, *PPS: Szkic dziejów* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1977), 66. Although Galicia had little heavy industry, the PPSD had a large following among workers employed in the trades, transport, and services, as well as among the intelligentsia.

²⁷ “Program Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej,” Paris 1892. Cited in Tych, *Polskie programy socjalistyczne*, 253.

²⁸ Józef Piłsudski, “Jak zostałem socjalistą?” *Promień* 8-9, 1903, 342–348, quoted in Józef Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe*, ed. by Leon Wasilewski, vol. 2 (Warszawa: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1937), 53.

²⁹ Piłsudski’s biographies are far too numerous to list. Perhaps among the best are: Waclaw Jędrzejewicz, *Józef Piłsudski, 1867-1935: Życiorys* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1982); Andrzej Garlicki, *Józef Piłsudski: 1867-1935* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1990). For a discussion of Piłsudski’s “federal” ideas see: Okulewicz, *Koncepcja “międzymorza”*; M. K. Dziewanowski, *Joseph Piłsudski: A European Federalist, 1918-1922* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969).

³⁰ Piłsudski, “Jak zostałem socjalistą,” quoted in Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe*, 2:53. According to most historians, both sympathetic and unfriendly to Piłsudski, the core of his worldview was shaped by his childhood experiences and early education, and did not significantly alter thereafter. Sergiusz Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 16; Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 41.

Specifically, his particular brand of Polish identity was inherited from his parents, especially his mother, and carried the unmistakable stamp of the multiethnic region of Lithuania where he grew up.

³¹ Dziewanowski, *Joseph Pilsudski*, 26.

³² Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 54–55.

³³ Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 40. In other words, it meant to identify with a political conception of nationhood, which was defined historically and territorially, and had little to do with one's ethnicity. Indeed, the restitution of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Lithuania within the borders of the Old Duchy was a nation-building project of a sizeable group of noble Polish-speaking inhabitants of Lithuania, known as the *krajowcy*. To be sure, neither Mickiewicz nor Piłsudski nor the *krajowcy* imagined that a reborn Grand Duchy of Lithuania could be entirely separate from Poland and Polish culture. Indeed, all of them implicitly assumed that the high culture of Lithuania would be Polish. Piłsudski himself visualized a multi-ethnic Lithuania recreated within its historical boundaries, and federated with Poland. In this arrangement, the two countries would have a common defense and foreign policy but retain their separate administrations. Naturally, many Lithuanians viewed Piłsudski's federalist conceptions as a smokescreen for Polish imperialism. I will return to this issue, but for now it should suffice to say that Piłsudski's identity was neither "Polish" nor "Lithuanian," in the sense in which these words are employed today (ie. ethnically). Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 42.

³⁴ "[The Poles of Lithuania] felt themselves to be totally different Poles and it was difficult to reach an understanding with them even in the most simple things," wrote Wincenty Witos, the peasant leader from south central Poland. Wincenty Witos, *Moje wspomnienia* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1981), 8.

³⁵ According to one of his early socialist comrades, Piłsudski was "a colorful nobleman from the borderlands, with the mind and heart of an 1863 insurrectionary ... Piłsudski was [a socialist] as far as class warfare, the international proletariat, and so on, but this leader of our Polish socialism was not in any way a modern democrat." Quoted in Roman Wapiński, *Świadomość polityczna w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Łódź: Wydawn. Łódzkie, 1989), 76.

³⁶ As Timothy Snyder writes, Piłsudski's patriotism was "founded upon nostalgic republican ideas of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania." Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 42.

³⁷ For Piłsudski's ideas regarding the nationalities question in Lithuania see Józef Piłsudski, "Nasze stanowisko na Litwie," *Walka*, November, 1903: 3-5 and "Kwestia żydowska na Litwie," *Walka*, November, 1903: 5-7, Reprinted in Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe*, 2:220–226.

³⁸ Quoted in Waldemar Paruch, *Od konsolidacji państwowej do konsolidacji narodowej: Mniejszości narodowe w myśli politycznej obozu piłsudczykowskiego, 1926-1939* (Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1997), 51.

³⁹ Piłsudski, „Jak zostałem socjalistą,” quoted in Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe*, 2:53.

⁴⁰Józef Piłsudski, "O patriotyzmie," *Walka* October, 1902, Quoted in Piłsudski, *Pisma zbiorowe*, 2:25.

⁴¹ Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, 30.

⁴² Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, 30–35, 126–128.

⁴³ Potkański, *Odrodzenie czynu niepodległościowego*, 251.

⁴⁴ Mackiewicz, *Historja Polski od 11 listopada 1918 r. do 17 września 1939 r.*, 34.

⁴⁵ Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland*, 60.

⁴⁶ Krzysztof Kawalec, *Roman Dmowski* (Warszawa: Editions Spotkania, 1996), 12.

⁴⁷ Roman Wapiński, *Pokolenia Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991), 14–134.

⁴⁸ My treatment of this process is indebted to Brian Porter. See Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁹ Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 191.

⁵⁰ Roman Dmowski, *Myśli nowoczesnego Polaka* (London: Nakładem Koła Młodych Stronnictwa Narodowego, 1953), 32.

⁵¹ Dmowski took some solace in the fact that "the hateful but at the same time so impressive Prussians" were "the product of the same racial material as the Poles." He also wanted the Poles to emulate Prussian imperialism and rejected the Polish tradition of "ethicism" in politics. Dmowski, *Myśli nowoczesnego Polaka*, 43, 57.

⁵² Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 205.

⁵³ Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 122–123.

⁵⁴ Thus, during the revolution of 1905, Endek theoretician Balicki wrote that through their actions, Polish workers had placed themselves "beyond the national pale." Potkański, *Odrodzenie czynu niepodległościowego*, 150.

⁵⁵ Hence, standing outside the imagined national community were not only those who didn't want to, or weren't invited to, assimilate, but also those who denied the need for national solidarity at all costs and invited the "others" into the nation.

⁵⁶ I would like to thank Brian Porter-Szűcs for suggesting this formulation.

⁵⁷ See Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁵⁸ Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village*, 3.

⁵⁹ See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁶⁰ Stefan Kieniewicz, *Historia Polski 1795-1918* (Warsaw: PWN, 1975), 287–288.

⁶¹ Kieniewicz, *Historia Polski 1795-1918*, 277.

⁶² Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 22.

⁶³ Jedlicki, *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują*, 296.

⁶⁴ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 130.

⁶⁵ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 47–49.

⁶⁶ Stanisław Kozicki, *Pamiętnik 1876-1939* (Słupsk: Akademia Pomorska w Słupsku, 2009), 104.

⁶⁷ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, x.

⁶⁸ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 181.

CHAPTER III

Contingent Events and the Evolution of Ethnic Nationalism: The National Democrats 1905-1922

It may seem that not much new can be said about the National Democratic conception of the Polish nation. Unlike the political thought of their enemies, National Democratic ideology comprises a coherent body of thought laid out in a relatively small number of key theoretical works, which lends itself to systematic analysis. As such, not surprisingly, it has been analyzed extensively.¹ Even the vexing question of National Democratic anti-Semitism has been the subject of exhaustive monographs.² Furthermore, as Brian Porter-Szűcs suggests, the key elements of National Democratic ideology were all laid out by the early twentieth century.³

The goal of this chapter, therefore, is not to offer an entirely new perspective on National Democratic thought or to analyze, yet again, the latter's foundational texts. Rather, my goal is to reconceptualise the development of the NDs' "ethnic" nationalism, and to present it not simply as a self-contained ideology governed solely by its own internal logic, but as dynamic discourse which underwent transformations primarily in response to specific, often entirely contingent, political events. Part of this project, therefore, is to ground the analysis of National Democratic nationalism in a deeper social and political context. Seen from this perspective, the violent Endek reaction to the

election of Narutowicz in 1922, and the designation of the president as a “Jewish stooge,” should be seen as the culmination of a chain of historical events, which rendered the Jewish threat to Polish sovereignty ever more serious in the nationalist imagination. As we will see, this process occurred in “fits and bursts” rather than in a linear manner.⁴

Political Anti-Semitism and the Revolution of 1905

Indeed, the revolution of 1905 was the perfect example of a contingent event which brought about changes that could not have been predicted from the gradual build up which made them possible.⁵ The disturbances in the Congress Kingdom began during the Russo-Japanese war, and grew slowly as the discontent with the Russian losses and mobilization swelled. In 1904, eighty anti-war demonstrations were organized in the Kingdom of Poland, eighteen of them in Warsaw, largely by the PPS.⁶ Opposition to the war also expressed itself in draft dodging, boycotts of government sponsored demonstrations, and school walk-outs. The response of the National Democrats to these early demonstrations was characteristic. Endek publications portrayed the war as a Russian matter, and an opportunity to “build up our own forces” rather than spill Polish blood “for someone else’s cause.”⁷

Despite National Democrats’ attempts to draw sharp limits between Polish and Russian societies, the spark for mass action in Poland was provided by events in St. Petersburg, the very heart of the Russian Empire. “Bloody Sunday,” as the massacre perpetrated upon a peaceful worker demonstration by Tsarist Cossacks became known,

galvanized the Polish working class. Although by 1904 the PPS was perhaps the only organization in Poland which possessed the organizational capacity of a mass party, it was caught off guard by the largely grassroots response of Polish workers to the massacre. Before the PPS or its socialist rivals, SDKPiL and the Jewish Bund, had time to react, “the workers acted on their own.”⁸ The strikes began in the industrial city of Łódź, and very quickly spread throughout the Kingdom reaching a mass character. According to Anna Żarnowska, a staggering 93.2% of all workers participated in the massive wave of strikes that swept the Congress Kingdom in 1905.⁹

On the eve of the Revolution, the two visions of the imagined community of Poland represented by the PPS and the National Democrats, and embodied by Dmowski and Piłsudski, were still, by and large, confined to a “conspiratorial elites.”¹⁰ The revolution provided both with the opportunity to test their strength and pitch their message to the masses.¹¹ While the massive and spontaneous nature of the strikes caught the socialist parties and the National Democrats alike by surprise, their reactions could not have been more different.¹² For the PPS, these grassroots anti-Tsarist strikes, with their combination of social and national demands, were a dream come true. The PPS jostled with its socialist rivals to provide the striking workers with leadership and bring them into its fold.¹³ At the same time, the party distinguished itself from its rivals by employing a pseudo military Combat Organization (*Organizacja Bojowa*), which was successfully used to protect worker demonstrations, engage Russian soldiers and police, and to carry out acts of terrorism, such as targeted assassinations, against the Tsarist regime.¹⁴

The National Democratic response could not have been more different. The NDs opposed the unrest on three counts. First, they believed that the Poles should not involve themselves in an essentially intra-Russian struggle or ally with the “internationalist” forces of socialism. Second, the thought of Polish workers striking against Polish factory owners ran against their ethos of the organic unity of the nation. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they quickly came to perceive the revolution as a “Jewish” enterprise that had nothing to do with Polish national goals or interests.¹⁵

This last claim may seem bizarre but it is extremely important in understanding the subsequent development of Endek rhetoric and politics. The violence that accompanied the revolutionary outbursts horrified Poland’s traditional intellectual and political elite, in both its conservative and liberal variants. Even the representatives of new ideological orientations, such as socialism or nationalism, who tried to pitch their message to “the people” and claimed to speak for them, were often surprised and indeed horrified by what they saw. But perhaps the most shocking aspect of the first days of the revolutionary events in Warsaw was the widespread participation of the Jews in the street demonstrations. It was particularly troubling for Polish national activists, socialists and nationalists alike, that many of the Jews who came out into the streets of Warsaw were relatively recent migrants from Russia (or more properly the Pale), who spoke Russian or Yiddish, but not Polish. Reminiscing of his first encounter with the revolutionary “masses,” the PPS activist Michał Sokolnicki wrote:

“On November 1, 1904 Warsaw saw its first glimpse of socialism [and] for many socialists, including myself, this day remained a nightmare.”¹⁶

In retrospect, the massive Jewish turnout should not have been surprising. The Jews made up a disproportionate share of the Polish working class and were more heavily concentrated near the city centre, with Christian Polish workers residing in the suburbs.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the assertive political participation of many unassimilated Yiddish and Russian speaking Jews in the revolutionary events shocked the Polish middle class and brought the “Jewish question” to the forefront of National Democratic concerns. And while anti-Semitic elements were certainly present in Endek rhetoric before 1905, scholars mark the revolutionary years as the beginning of full blown anti-Semitic agitation by the National Democratic movement.¹⁸

The first organized response by the NDs was a massive procession organized on November 5, 1905, as an answer to the “revolutionary” and “non-Polish” demonstration of November 1.¹⁹ The National Democratic demonstration was legal and was intended not against the Tsarist regime but against the revolutionary upheaval spread by the socialists; it was organized to show the strength of the National Democratic movement *vis a vis* the socialists and “the Jews.”²⁰ The demonstrations adopted a patriotic and religious iconography, with pictures of the Virgin Mary, religious hymns, and patriotic songs. It is noteworthy, however, that the song chanted by the demonstrators was not *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła*, the traditional anthem of Polish independence fighters, or even the anti-German *Rota*, which would become later become the unofficial anthem of the National Democratic movement, but *Boże coś Polskę*, the former official anthem of the Russian-ruled Polish Kingdom.

The Polish Jewish journalist Bernard Singer recalled the demonstration in the following words:

Church and guild banners were mixed together. I was moved by the sight of a group of '63 freedom fighters. I couldn't believe that those who fought in 1863 were still alive. If I had stayed in that spot for the whole time I would have remained charmed by the manifestation.[But later] from every Church crowds poured out [to join the demonstration.] There was ever more priests. ... From under the statue of Mickiewicz, a speech was made which dripped with loyalism towards the Tsar and ... thanked him for the nebulous hope of autonomy [for Poland.]”²¹

The fact that the National Democratic demonstrations were legal and tacitly supported by the Tsarist government illustrates that the latter was beginning to see the NDs as possible allies. This development was of critical importance for understanding the future evolution of the National Democratic movement—in the Endek imagination, the Jews and the socialists were beginning to replace the Russians, and the Partitioning Powers in general, as Poland's most important enemies.

The anti-Semitic agitation of the National Democrats took many forms, and there is no doubt that it presented a response to a two twofold fear gripping the new Polish middle and lower middle classes—the fear revolutionary turmoil and of newfound Jewish political assertiveness. In reality, these two developments were very tenuously connected, in the sense that both could ultimately be attributed to the rapid modernization of Poland's social and economic structures. However, both first became visible in 1905. And as we will see, in the National Democratic imagination, the socialist and Jewish “threats” would become ever more closely intertwined.

Urban legends about supposed Jewish slights to Polish “national dignity” (*godność narodowa*) began to spread around Warsaw and other big cities. Among the stories repeated around Warsaw was that a demonstration of Jewish workers from the Bund walked through the city chanting “Down with White Goose,” in an insulting reference to the White Eagle, Poland’s coat of arms. Whether any of these stories were true is highly doubtful, but what is significant is that they seemed to be quickly accepted.²² While there is little evidence for overt political anti-Semitism among the Polish masses before 1905, the anti-Semitic agitation which began during the revolution certainly fell on fertile soil.²³ The National Democratic leadership clearly took note, and a vicious circle of propaganda was set in motion—attacking the Jews was popular among a certain part of Polish society, which won the National Democrats new adherents who, in turn, provided more impetus for the movement’s anti-Semitic agitation.

It is important to note the identification of socialists, and the left more generally, with the Jews, which began to dominate Endek publications at this time. This trend, which would come to its tragic culmination in the murder of Narutowicz, was endorsed by Roman Dmowski himself, who attacked “non-Polish agitators,” referred to the Combat Organization of PPS as “Jews and lunatics,” and saw the categories of socialist and Jew as largely though not entirely coterminous.²⁴ Nonetheless, during the revolution the Endeks saw the socialists, and not the Jews, as the primary threat to the interests of the Polish nation, as they defined them. What seemed to worry them most was the growing success of socialism among the masses.²⁵

Despite their generally low opinion of the working class, the National Democrats quickly attempted to shore up their influence among Polish workers. The National Workers' Union (*Narodowy Związek Robotniczy* or NZR) was created for this purpose in the spring of 1905. The NZR, in turn, soon created its militia, the Combat Union (*Związek Bojowy*), directly modeled on the PPS-Combat Organization. Violence between the National Democrats and Socialists became endemic through the years 1905-1907. In this matter, it was Dmowski himself who set the tone. During the peak of the strike wave, when printers walked off the job, Dmowski decreed that the (legal) National Democratic organ the *Goniec* had to appear "no matter what." To this end, he fired the paper's editor and ordered NZR militiamen, armed with clubs and firearms, to replace the striking printers. When socialists (from SDKPiL) sent their own militia to prevent the "scabs" from going into the building, a pitched battle broke out, in which two men received gunshot wounds and many were seriously beaten. Nonetheless, Dmowski triumphed—next morning the *Goniec* was the only paper to appear in the Kingdom of Poland.²⁶

Clashes such as this one soon devolved into an ever intensifying circle of violence, which was exacerbated by the fact that the NZR often cooperated with Tsarist police in its strike-breaking activities.²⁷ All three socialist parties (the PPS, the SDKPiL, and the Bund) were involved in clashes with the NZR and other National Democratic militias. While historians sympathetic to the National Democrats stress that most the violence occurred between the Endeks and the SDKPiL, PPS activists believed that their party had been singled out for special attention and suffered the brunt of the attacks.²⁸ The conflict became so acrimonious that both sides began resorting to targeted assassinations of rival

activists. According to Sokolnicki, “fratricidal battles which initially began as assassinations of leaders or individuals, turned into regular shootouts in factories and streets and into random murder.”²⁹ In the industrial city of Łódź, where the fighting between the National Democrats and socialists was most intense, some 400 people were killed in fratricidal fighting between rival organizations ostensibly dedicated to the Polish national cause.

In these bouts of violence, religious identities often intertwined with political ones, not only in the Jewish case. Another group which became a special target for the nationalists were the Mariavites, a small heretical sect following the mystical teachings of a Catholic nun, who would be formally excommunicated from the Church in 1906. The Mariavites were socially radical and tended towards membership in socialist parties, especially the SDKPiL. The proximate cause for the worst period of bloodletting in Łódź was the murder of a Mariavite priest by members of an Endek militia, which set off a spiral of violence in which some 200 workers died.

The revolution ended not with a bang but with a whimper, as the Russian government restored order and Polish society became increasingly tired of the chaos and instability. As the wave of strikes, boycotts, and violence slowly petered out, Polish society emerged from the crisis profoundly transformed. Most importantly, the revolution marked the emergence of the PPS leftist patriotism and National Democratic nationalism as two rival discourses of the nation with traction not only among intellectuals but with true mass following. Yet, even though it was the PPS which had played the more active

role in the revolution, it was the National Democratic movement which probably gained more from the turmoil.³⁰ In retrospect the backlash against socialism should be understandable. As Michał Sokolnicki writes, “a large part of Polish society was beginning to see the leaders of the revolutionary movement, yesterday’s knights of independence, as the disturbers of peace and order, and the enemies of their own nation.”³¹ According to Bernard Singer by the end of the revolution, “in the Polish bourgeois neighborhoods the National Democrats ruled, while in the workers’ neighborhoods thugs from the reactionary NZR chased the socialists.”³²

The Endeks’ attacks on the PPS as an internationalist, “Jewish,” or anti-patriotic force seemed to gain traction among large strata of Poles, and the National Democrats were able to position themselves as the only true defenders of the Polish nation. The rhetorical strategy of equating socialism with Jewish interests seemed to have paid off. According to Mieczysław Sobczak, the turning point which prompted Varsovians to “move away from the PPS and towards the ND” was the aforementioned myth of the “White Goose” and, more generally, the National Democrats’ successful rhetorical attacks against Jewish socialist from the Bund.³³ Obviously, this claim is difficult to verify empirically, but there is little doubt that identity politics played an extremely important part in this conflict, and that in this field the Endeks were largely victorious. Even though the PPS was in fact a more firmly committed to the cause of Polish independence, the Endeks’ iconography seemed to have struck a deeper chord with the masses, as did their portrayal of their rivals as not truly Polish.

Equally important to the rise of the ND and the PPS as rival mass movements, was the legacy of bad blood between them, which the events of 1905-1907 left. To quote Sokolnicki again:

I became afraid of the polarization of society and the uncrossable chasm opening up between people. How could such a society, polarized, split, divided in itself, full of hatred and thoughtless dark thuggery and partisan demagoguery, ever succeed in winning independence?³⁴

The National Democratic characterization of all socialism as “Jewish” was the first step in excluding the socialists (along with the Jews) from membership in the Polish nation. The Polish left, for its part, came to view the Endeks as strike-breakers and collaborators who, for all their talk of the “Polish nation” cared little for national independence, and were only too happy to collaborate with the Russian police in suppressing those who truly fought for it. While PPS rhetoric did not go as far as to view the Endeks as non-Poles, it certainly portrayed them as traitors to the national cause. This bitter legacy would dominate relations not only between these two parties but, later, between the entire left and right-wings of the Polish political spectrum.

The Duma Elections and the “Jewish Envoy from Warsaw”

Although from the perspective of the socialist movement, and especially the Polish socialist movement, the revolution was a failure, it did create what at the time appeared to be profound changes in the manner in which the Russian Empire was governed. In an attempt to bolster its crumbling legitimacy, the government created the State Duma. The

Duma was envisioned as advisory council which, many hoped at the time, would eventually evolve into a full-fledged parliament.

Unlike their Russian counterparts, Polish and Jewish socialists, including the PPS, SDKPiL, and the Bund, called for a boycott of the elections, because of the Duma's lack of real power and the limited electoral franchise. The National Democrats, who had always prided themselves on their common sense or "realism," and had given up on any immediate plans for Polish independence, saw the Duma as a great opportunity to win legal concessions for the Polish cause. Because of the ethno-national makeup of Polish cities, the peculiarities of Russian electoral franchise, as well as the specific objectives of the Endeks and their opponents, the Duma elections became a crucial turning point in the National Democratic slide towards the absolute exclusion of the Jews from the "imagined community" of Poland.

The key battleground of the elections in the Congress Kingdom was Warsaw, where Dmowski himself decided to contest the 1906 election. Russian electoral law seemed tailor made to expose latent ethno-religious tensions among the city's citizens. The election would be indirect, with qualified citizens (male owners of real estate and businesses) casting votes for eighty electors, who, in turn would elect two deputies. Workers and men who didn't own property chose only three electors. Aside from ensuring a socialist boycott, these regulations gave Warsaw's Jews an influence on the vote that far exceeded their already considerable share of the population.

The Endeks' main opponents in 1906 were the Progressive Democrats (*Pedecja* or PD), a grouping of Warsaw liberals, whose reformist social agenda enjoyed some support among the Warsaw middle class, but who lacked deep rooted social support among the masses. In order to increase their chances in the election, the PDs struck an alliance with the Jewish Electoral Committee (formed by the *kehilla* leadership, dominated at this time by assimilationists). Under the terms of the deal, the Committee promised to deliver the Jewish vote for the Progressives and, in return, the latter would give one of the two available Warsaw seats to a Jew (the other would go to a Christian Pole).

The National Democrats' response to this arrangement was swift. The PDs, Endek press announced, "had sold Warsaw to the Jews."³⁵ The National Democratic propaganda machine hammered this point home mercilessly. The alliance proved a disaster for the PDs and, in a different way, for the Jews. The "Jewish vote" promised by the Committee never fully materialized, because its assimilationist leaders had limited only limited support among Warsaw's conservative Jewish community.³⁶ On the other hand, the Endeks' portrayal of their opponents as "pawns of the Jews" seems to have worked and was the key factor which secured them a victory over the Progressive Democrats.³⁷

Nonetheless, it is important to note that at this stage, despite an increasing barrage of anti-Semitic attacks, Endek rhetoric still left a small window for Polish-Jewish cooperation. A National Democratic pamphlet signed by the movement's chief ideologues stated the following:

We do not push away anyone who stretches their hand out to us and desires to work together with us for the benefit of the country. [In this

context] we specifically want to mention the Jewish population. The Jewish Electoral Committee ... invoking slogans of religious-tribal solidarity forced you to fight against us, as against a tribe. [The Jews] should know that we do not desire this fight in the future and for this reason we call upon the Jews to turn back from the false path onto which they were pushed. Our representatives have always stood on the ground of toleration and equal rights. And they will be the spokesmen of lifting the discriminatory laws against the Jews in the entire state.³⁸

It is important to briefly pause and examine this statement, which is significant for two reasons. First, the rhetorical strategy of the passage is troubling, and it foreshadows future developments of Endek political strategy. Specifically, the National Democrats effectively demanded that the Jews stretch their hands out to *them*, implicitly the only authentic representatives of Polish society. Supporting other Polish political parties, in this case the Progressive Democrats, was tantamount to refusing “to work for the benefit of the country.” In other words, the Jews found themselves with binary choice: Support the National Democrats or be branded as enemies of the nation.

Still it is important to note that the image of accepting the Jewish populations’ “outstretched hand” conjured up by the pamphlet (whether sincerely or not) is much more conciliatory than what we usually expect from the National Democrats, and infinitely milder than the constant barrage of hate-filled vitriol which would be characteristic of their electoral campaigns in independent Poland. Therefore, Theodore Weeks’ contention appears to be valid:

Although anti-Jewish rhetoric played a significant role in Endek campaigning of 1906, it lacked the obsessive quality it would acquire later. ... [O]ne could still find in 1906 echoes of the spirit of 1863, with Poles and Jews working together.³⁹

The Tsarist autocracy, unable to deal with any real opposition, quickly disbanded the First Duma. In elections to the Second Duma, National Democratic propaganda again portrayed the Endeks as the saviors of Polish Warsaw from the Jews and once again gave them a victory over their opponents.⁴⁰ Yet, while tacitly stirring up anti-Semitism, the National Democrats still claimed to be committed to equal political rights for Jews. In any case, the Second Duma, hastily elected the next year, was even more “insubordinate” and was disbanded even faster.

Unwilling to shut down the Duma altogether, the government changed the electoral franchise, and the elections to the Third Duma were held under an even more restrictive curie system. The Endeks won the elections virtually unopposed, as it was boycotted by all other Polish and Jewish parties. In the Duma, the National Democrats opted for a new strategy, devised by Roman Dmowski himself. Breaking his alliance with the Russian Constitutional Democrats, Dmowski sought to embark on a policy of cooperation with the Tsarist government. In exchange for supporting the Tsar, the Endeks hoped to win concessions for the Polish national movement in the realms of culture and education. In fact, Dmowski attempted to deploy his movement’s growing anti-Semitism in the service of building an alliance with the Tsarist government and demonstrating his break with the Russian liberals.⁴¹

Dmowski’s strategy of loyalty to the government ended up as a giant failure. The loyalty shown by the Endeks to the tsar failed to win any meaningful concession for the Poles even in the cultural sphere. Even the emphasis on anti-Semitism failed to convince

the Tsarist authorities of the National Democrats' loyalty, and the government (correctly) pointed out the hypocrisy of demanding autonomy for the Poles while denying it to the Jews. At the same time, the Endeks' loyalism came under increasing fire from the Poles and even from circles within their own camp. In 1908, the NZR left the National League and in 1909 the youth organization "Zet" followed suit.

But despite the lack of positive results and an increasing criticism of the policy of loyalism from diverse strata of Polish society, Dmowski stuck to his guns with characteristic determination and decided to contest the 1912 election without altering his platform. The 1912 Duma election in Warsaw was more than a turning point in Polish-Jewish relations. It was also a key event propelling the spiral of the National Democratic brand of Polish nationalism towards ever increasing racial hatred, and the ever-closer identification of the terms "Jewish" and "left-wing" in the Endek imagination. In sum it was a foreshadowing of the kind of strategy and rhetoric which the right would use against its enemies in independent Poland.

Three factors helped to turn the 1912 Duma elections in Warsaw into what some historians have called "Polish-Jewish war."⁴² First, as we have already noted, in the months preceding the election the National Democrats' popularity within Polish society was at a low point, largely due to their failed policy of placating the government. Combating the "Jewish threat" was probably the only card of their platform which hadn't been discredited by this strategy. Second, shortly before the election it became apparent that Jews would now constitute the majority of voters in Warsaw. On January 1, 1912,

Warsaw's population was estimated as being 57% Catholic and 36% Jewish. However, due to the different socioeconomic status of the two groups, an absolute majority (some 55%) of the voters in the general curia would be Jews.⁴³ At the same time, the authorities decided that one of Warsaw's two Duma seats would henceforth be reserved for the city's tiny Russian minority. Thus, Poles and Jews were pitted directly against each other for the election of a single candidate. In a development which troubled not only the National Democrats, it was now seemed possible that the traditional capital of Poland would be represented by one Russian and one Jew, but not a single Pole. This fact was viewed with alarm by all strata of Polish society and it certainly rendered many Poles who did not overtly identify with anti-Semitism more susceptible to Endek propaganda.

Finally, shortly before the election, the Russian government promised (though this was never realized) to introduce municipal self-government in the Congress Kingdom. The problem from the Polish point of view was that most of the towns which were to be affected by this decision had very large Jewish minorities, and in some cases, majorities. Under restrictive Russian electoral law, Jews would come to constitute electoral majorities in virtually all the Polish towns, as indeed was the case in Warsaw itself. Hence, many Poles feared, the only real self-government in Poland (since there was no provincial self-government) would be taken out of their hands.⁴⁴

Clearly, these factors created a potentially explosive situation, in which Polish anger at the continual frustration of their national ambitions could now easily be turned against the Jews, rather than the Russians whose restrictive voting system, not to mention

other forms of cultural oppression, was obviously the real cause of these frustrations. Still, just because Russian electoral laws privileged Jews and created a sense of injustice among the Poles, did not mean that a conflict was inevitable. The events in the election and its aftermath were not predetermined, but resulted from the specific decisions and actions of particular historical actors.

On the Polish side, the elections pitted the National Democrats, represented by Dmowski himself, against the so-called “Concentration,” an alliance of Progressive Democrats, Endeks disillusioned by Dmowski’s loyalist stance in the Duma, and smaller parties. At the very beginning of the election Dmowski made a conscious and determined decision to play the anti-Semitic card, regardless of how conciliatory the Jewish electors may prove to be. Before the elections, he wrote to the great pianist and Polish national activist in the United States, Igancy Paderewski, the following words:

We declared that we do not believe in an understanding with the Jews on terms acceptable to the Poles, and that we are preparing for an intense electoral struggle with the Jews. And we plan to carry this fight through. And if the Jews win, they will pay for it with losses in economic life because there will be a great anger against them among the entire population.⁴⁵

This was a Machiavellian masterstroke. Dmowski had effectively set himself up in a position in which he could not lose entirely. Warsaw’s Jews would either have to vote for him, which was highly unlikely, or he could claim that *they* had stolen the election from him, in which case he would be able to portray himself as an unjustly robbed national champion of the “real” Poles. Structuring the campaign around the Jewish question would also help deflect public attention from his conciliatory and highly unpopular stance towards the Russians. And to top it all off, this new enemy was not, in

contrast to the Russians, a dangerous one. Whereas criticizing the Russians landed one in jail, criticizing the Jews would, at worst, result in unfavorable articles in English or American newspapers. Therefore Dmowski stood to either win the seat, which was unlikely, or score a major victory in public opinion and refocus Polish nationalism onto a new main enemy. He also moved further in appropriating the right to *define* who was and was not Jewish. “For us a candidate will be Jewish who is supported by Jews, because he will fulfill their Jewish demands,” Dmowski wrote, “regardless of whether he will be a Jew or a Pole by descent.”⁴⁶

The Jews, for their part, still united under the aegis of the Jewish Electoral Committee were well aware of the potential for danger inherent in this situation. The Committee announced that they were willing to vote for a Polish Christian deputy to the Duma in Warsaw, if two of their demands were met. First, they demanded that the candidate should commit himself to full legal equality for the Jews within the Russian Empire.⁴⁷ Second, they wanted at least one Jewish deputy elected from the Polish Kingdom.⁴⁸ If these demands were not met, the Committee warned, they would be forced to choose a Jewish deputy from Warsaw.

On the surface these demands did not appear to pose too grave a problem. In fact, the PDs and even the Endeks theoretically had supported legal equality for all citizens, including Jews, as recently as the 1906 elections. However, the constant flow of anti-Semitic propaganda sponsored by the National Democratic press had worked its magic, and the political climate was not what it had been six years prior. No doubt remembering

the Endeks' successful portrayal of their enemies as "Jewish candidates" in the 1906 election, and cowed by the Endeks' constant attacks on the "Polish-Jewish Concentration," the Concentration's candidate for the Duma, Henryk Kucharzewski, tried to keep his distance from the Jews. While he accepted the "principle of equal rights," he also endorsed restrictions on Jewish self-government in Poland and made a number of allegedly anti-Semitic comments in his speeches.⁴⁹

The outcome of the election seemed to make an amicable solution to the problem possible. Kucharzewski trounced Dmowski in the Polish Christian districts, winning 5 precincts and 23 electors, to the latter's 2 precincts and 11 electors. The Jewish Electoral Committee carried 8 precincts and won 46 electors, enough to elect any candidate it chose to. Since the PPS had boycotted the election, the three electors designated for the workers' curia were from PPS-Left, a branch of the PPS which did not prioritize the question of national independence.

However, discussions between the Jewish Committee and the Concentration resulted in a stalemate. The Committee demanded that Kucharzewski make a formal declaration of his support for "equal rights." The Endeks threatened Kucharzewski from making any "alliance with the Jews," which they would consider a betrayal of the Polish nation. Faced with these choices, Kucharzewski refused to commit himself, believing no doubt that the Jews would not have the courage to push through their own candidate and that they had no choice but to vote for him, since voting for an Endek was obviously out of the question.

Bernard Singer, who witnessed the immediate aftermath of the election, described it in the following words:

Suddenly a screaming came forth from the city hall. I found myself on the steps. I saw a delegate of the Concentration and a friend of the Jews, the famous surgeon Ignacy Baranowski, who was still screaming and waving his cane. From his outbursts, I readily understood that a left-wing candidate had been elected only thanks to the Jewish votes. The Jews walked silently down the stairs, without looking around, with lowered heads. Their expressions were fit for Judgment Day.⁵⁰

What happened? Afraid to choose a Jew, but unwilling to cast their lot with the Concentration in the absence of the latter's guarantees of support, the Jewish electors opted for Eugeniusz Jagiełło, a totally unknown member of the largely irrelevant socialist splinter group PPS-Left. Jagiełło himself was a pipe-fitter and a "political non-entity" who ended up on the PPS-Left list only because the party's real leaders were either in hiding or barred from politics.⁵¹ On the surface, the decision was absolutely paradoxical. Members of the Jewish bourgeoisie sent a radical, Christian Polish worker to represent their interests in the Duma. Yet, the Jewish electors saw it as their only available choice—Jagiełło was the only Christian Pole among the delegates willing to unequivocally commit himself to support equal rights for Jews

The Boycott

The response of the National Democrats was immediate and ruthless. Even before the election, Dmowski had threatened an economic boycott against "the Jews" (by which he meant *all* Jews regardless of their political leanings) if the Jewish Electoral Committee

tried to play an independent role in the election. True to form, the Endeks refused any friendly overtures from the Committee, and preparations for the boycott were made in advance.⁵² Jagiełło was immediately denounced as “the Jewish envoy from Warsaw.” A special newspaper, the *Gazeta Poranna “Dwa Grosze”* (Two-penny Morning Gazette), was started specifically for the purpose of supporting the boycott. The *Dwugroszówka* (Two-penny), as it was popularly known, became a permanent and popular fixture on the Warsaw newspaper scene. In the words of the National Democratic activist Stanisław Kozicki, the paper “by its very nature devoted a substantial amount of its attention to the Jewish question.”⁵³ This was a major understatement. Its attacks on the Jews were so vicious that they shocked even the Russian censors (not usually known for their philosemitism), who confiscated several of the paper’s issues and fined its editors.⁵⁴

Many members of the Roman Catholic clergy enthusiastically joined in the boycott. Some priests went so far as to “as to label any form of economic interaction with the Jews ‘a great sin.’”⁵⁵ Again, the Tsarist government, certainly no friend of the Jews, found itself forced to intervene with the Episcopate and demanded an end to the more extreme forms of hatemongering emanating from the pulpit. In some ways, therefore, the boycott could be seen as the beginning of the slow convergence of sentiments (if not yet ideas) between the National Democrats and the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁶

More troubling was the reaction of the progressives and some liberals to the boycott. The most stark example is that of the positivist thinker Świętochowski who, as a result of the election and the perceived “betrayal” of the Polish nation by the Jews, moved

from a position of advocating the full integration of the Jews into Polish society to one of unbridled anti-Semitism.⁵⁷ Świątochowski justified his change of heart by the supposed change which took place in Jewish society itself and the Jews' rejection of loyalty to Poland and adoption of a particularist political identity.⁵⁸

Certainly, the boycott had very tangible effects on the economic situation of many Polish Jews as well as on their perception of their life and future among their Polish neighbors. Once again, Singer provides insight into the subjective experience of this new current of anti-Semitism:

The strolls [traditionally taken by Jews] in the Polish neighborhoods gradually ceased. At one of the concerts [at the Philharmonic] a sad incident took place during a recital of Beethoven's music conducted by the well-known Warsaw conductor, Birnbaum, who had Jewish roots: the conductor customarily held out his hand to the leading violinist, Oźmiński; his hand was left hanging in the air. The Jewish part of the audience left the Philharmonic [for good]. Slowly, the Jews also began their retreat from the theatre.⁵⁹

It is not surprising that the Duma elections and the 1912 boycott are widely interpreted as the triumph of a new, nationalistic and thoroughly anti-Semitic conception of identity among Christian Poles, and a watershed in Polish-Jewish relations. According to Theodore Weeks, an aggressive political anti-Semitism was adopted by "large sections, indeed the majority, of Polish society," as early as 1910.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, it is important to note that despite its importance, the boycott did not mark the universal acceptance of anti-Semitic nationalism among Polish society and that many Poles still subscribed to other, more inclusive, brands of Polish patriotism. This point is made by Robert Blobaum

in his masterful analysis of the economic boycott of 1912.⁶¹ Not only was the boycott condemned by isolated but important intellectuals and public figures.⁶² More importantly, according to Blobaum, it “certainly did not acquire wide-spread support in either town or countryside, where the Polish population greeted the boycott with the same apathy it had shown toward the earlier Duma elections.”⁶³ In fact, as Blobaum conclusively demonstrates, most of the violence which took place during the boycott was directed not against Jews, but against Poles who refused to subordinate themselves to it. As Blobaum goes on to point out, the very need for such coercive measures, and the deployment of nationalist thugs outside of Jewish shops indicates that the participation of many Poles in the boycott was far from voluntary.⁶⁴

Of course this doesn't mean that those Poles who resisted calls for the boycott, even at the risk of physical confrontation, did so out of sympathy for the Jews. Most, in all likelihood, were motivated by economic self-interest, loyalty to their traditional merchants, routine, or simply the refusal to be intimidated by bullies. The point, however, is that they clearly did not buy into the vision of “national solidarity” offered by the National Democratic ideologues and reinforced by their thugs. While their vision of the political community of Poland did not necessarily include the Jews (and in most cases it probably did not), it did not necessarily exclude them either.

While the importance of the boycott for the future of Polish-Jewish relations was paramount, the boycott also sharpened cleavages *within* (non-Jewish) Polish society. In particular, it deepened the chasm between the National Democratic right's conception of

the nation, which now became obsessively anti-Semitic, and the worldview of the Patriotic Left, which, as will be discussed, was not significantly affected by the boycott and continued its own evolution along an entirely different discursive trajectory.

Furthermore, the National Democrats emerged from boycott united under Dmowski's undisputed leadership, which had so recently looked shaky. The reason for Dmowski's reassertion of authority was the focus on a new main enemy—the Jews, who only now began to be seen as more threatening than the Russians and the Germans.⁶⁵ While it seems that Dmowski may have initially used the Jewish issue instrumentally in order to deflect criticism from his policy of loyalism towards Russia, there is no doubt that his anti-Semitism became ever more “sincere” and indeed obsessive, and that his preoccupation with the “Jewish Question” filtered down to his followers.

Equally important is the further conflation of the terms “Jewish” and “left-wing” in the minds of the Polish right. Władysław Jagiełło, “the Jewish envoy from Warsaw,” a socialist pipe-fitter elected by the Jewish bourgeoisie over the heads of the Polish middle class was the perfect confirmation of the trope of Jewish-socialist unity, which had dominated Endek imagination since at least 1905. The fact that the alliance between the Jewish Electoral Committee and the PPS-Left was entirely instrumental made no difference here. The identification of the terms “Jewish” and “leftist” would dominate right-wing political rhetoric and contribute to the unusually venomous political dynamic of the early years of the Second Republic.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that according to many historians the boycott marked the triumph of an exclusive and ethnically defined Polish nationalism. In the words of Theodore Weeks, by 1914:

The possibility of fusing Poles and Jews into a harmonious synthesis was overwhelmingly rejected by Polish society. By the end of this period, the whole of Polish society had adapted the stance laid out by NDs...: in order to be accepted as Poles the Jews had to support the Polish cause unconditionally, even to the point of denouncing the community of their own birth.⁶⁶

As we will shortly see, it is not quite true that “the whole of Polish society” had accepted the National Democratic program. What is beyond doubt, however, is that by 1912 the anti-Semitism of the National Democrats themselves had greatly intensified. While this conclusion is not new or controversial, the aim of this chapter is to show that this intensification was not spurred by new ideas, but by very specific political events, which, in the Endek imagination, pitted “the Poles” against “the Jews.” Key among these were the 1905 Revolution, in which substantial parts of the Jewish population sided with socialism and the Duma elections, in which restrictive Russian laws conspired to turn the electoral campaigns into zero-sum contests between the Polish and Jewish bourgeoisies.

Ethnic Hatred and Contingent Events

It didn't matter, in the National Democratic imagination, that key force behind the 1905 Revolution (in Poland) was the Polish PPS, rather than the Jewish Bund, or that the Duma elections were set up on the basis of faulty and highly restrictive franchise by the Russians, who disliked the Jews as much as anyone else. The point here is that once the

National Democrats accepted the ideological premise that Jewish involvement in Polish politics was a negative and destructive, this judgment would continue to structure their subsequent interpretations of political events. These in turn, would furnish their general conspiracy theories with specific and concrete examples, which could be utilized in the task of mobilizing the masses. The boycott, which undoubtedly raised “awareness” of the Jewish “threat” among the Polish masses, and greatly contributed to the rise of mass anti-Semitism, is perhaps the best example of the mechanics at play.

This process continued through the 1910s and was particularly intensified by World War I. Polish-Jewish relations during the war have been exhaustively researched by Konrad Żeliński, and here I would only like to briefly restate his central claims.⁶⁷ In the main, the hardships and tensions caused by the war further strained Polish-Jewish relations at the grass roots level. Specific charges leveled by many Poles against the country’s Jewish community included collaboration with Germans, sympathy for the Bolsheviks, demands for autonomy, and lack of support for Polish independence. These sentiments, which intensified even further during the Polish-Soviet War, combined with widespread poverty, dislocation, and anarchic conditions, found an expression in outbursts of anti-Jewish violence, which claimed some 200-300 lives in the years 1918-1920.⁶⁸ The common theme linking these events with the Duma elections is that, again, Poles and Jews found themselves interacting on a playing field designed by a third party (German or Bolshevik) which appeared, to the National Democrats and their sympathizers, to pit the two groups directly against each other.

While World War I and the Polish-Soviet War intensified anti-Semitism at the grassroots level, the Versailles Peace Talks had the same result on the level of the ND leadership. Indeed, it was the NDs, and specifically Dmowski, who represented Poland in its dealing with the victorious Allied Powers, even after Piłsudski and his followers captured power in the country itself. But while Dmowski's representation of Poland at Versailles was largely successful, it further bolstered his anti-Semitism and the belief that the Jews were out to destroy Poland. It is undoubtedly true that following his role in the Boycott of 1912, Dmowski became widely associated with anti-Semitism and was not particularly popular among Jewish communities, in the west or east. There is also no doubt that many Jewish leaders lobbied the Western governments against him and therefore, since he represented the Poles, against Poland. Faced with manifestations of this understandable hostility, Dmowski was increasingly coming to see himself as "a man being combated and discredited by the Jews and secret organizations."⁶⁹

According to his colleagues, following 1918 the Jewish question began to "fully consume" the leader of the National Democrats.⁷⁰ Indeed, upon his return to Poland, Dmowski removed himself from public life prominent because he sincerely feared that his assuming too prominent a position with the state would lead to concentrated Jewish attacks against Poland. Yet, even as he temporarily retired from political life, Dmowski continued to exert an enormous intellectual and political influence upon the National Democratic movement, and to support its intensifying anti-Semitism.

In this chapter I tried to present the argument that the growth of National Democratic anti-Semitism resulted from the interplay of an ideological discourse,

elaborated for the most part prior to 1905, and specific contingent events. The paradigmatic example of this process were the 1912 elections, which had pitted the Polish and Jewish bourgeoisies in a zero sum competition for a single seat in the Duma, and which provided the NDs with “evidence” that the Jews were indeed the enemies of Poland. Of course, these events were interpreted in light of an already anti-Semitic discourse. Once the National Democrats accepted the ideological premise that Jewish involvement in Polish politics was a negative and destructive, this judgment would continue to structure their subsequent interpretations of political events. These in turn, would furnish their general conspiracy theories with specific and concrete examples, which could be utilized in the task of mobilizing the masses.

But the flipside of this argument is that the *events* themselves mattered. The Duma elections helped to intensify the anti-Semitic rhetoric of ND nationalists in large measure because of the manner in which they were structured—if all the citizens of Warsaw had had one vote, it would not have been possible for the National Democrats to make the argument that “the Jews had stolen the election” or that Władysław Jagiełło, who would never had been elected, was “the Jewish envoy from Warsaw.” Similarly, there would have been no trigger for the Economic Boycott. This is not to make the “crux of Cleopatra’s nose argument” and say that the National Democrats would have abandoned anti-Semitism or that their discourse of the nation would have evolved along an entirely different trajectory “if only” the Russians chose to grant universal suffrage in the Duma elections. My point, however, is that to understand how the rise of anti-Semitism in Poland actually took place, we must look at the interplay between events and discursive

structures. And the particular manner in which National Democratic anti-Semitism became radicalized following the contingent events of 1905 and 1912 certainly wasn't inevitable.

Still, on the basis of the brief overview presented in this chapter it may appear, as Theodore Weeks suggests, that by 1918 the victory of political anti-Semitism in independent Poland was all but preordained. Indeed, the National Democratic movement can be seen as being locked into a vicious spiral of ever intensifying anti-Semitism since at least 1905. But it is too often forgotten that the National Democratic movement did not represent all Polish patriots (or nationalists, if by the latter word we understand all those who fought for the independence of Poland), let alone "all of Polish society." Indeed, as we will shortly see, Józef Piłsudski and his followers, who would come to rule the Second Polish Republic for all but four years of its two decade long existence, subscribed to a very different vision of the imagined community of the nation. To understand the victory of exclusive nationalism and political anti-Semitism in Poland, we must look deeper into the discursive field where all those who claimed to represent the "Polish nation" competed for the allegiance of the masses.

¹ Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*; Wapiński, *Narodowa Demokracja, 1893-1939*; Małgorzata Domagalska, *Antysemityzm dla inteligencji? Kwestia Żydowska w publicystyce Adolfa Nowaczyńskiego na łamach "Myśli narodowej" i "Prosto z mostu" na tle porównawczym* (Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2004); Bogumił Grott, *Zygmunt Balicki: Ideolog Narodowej Demokracji* (Kraków: Arcana, 1995); Mich, *Obcy W Polskim Domu*. Biographies of Dmowski also often act as *de facto* intellectual histories of the National Democratic movement. See Roman Wapiński, *Roman Dmowski* (Lublin: Wydawn. Lubelskie, 1988); Kawalec, *Roman Dmowski*; Grzegorz Krzywiec, *Szowinizm po polsku: Przypadek Romana Dmowskiego, 1886-1905* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2009).

² Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*; Olaf Bergmann, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec problematyki żydowskiej w latach 1918-1929* (Poznań: Wydawn. Poznańskie, 1998).

³ See Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*.

⁴ Sewell, "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures," 841.

⁵ Sewell, "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures," 843.

⁶ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 43.

⁷ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 45.

⁸ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 75.

⁹ In comparison, the figure in Russia proper was only 20%. Anna Żarnowska, "Próba analizy ruchu strajkowego w Królestwie Polskim w dobie rewolucji 1905-1907," *Przegląd Historyczny* 65, no. 3 (1965): 433, Quoted in Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 73.

¹⁰ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 32-33.

¹¹ The conflict between the PPS and the NDs was prefigured even before the violence in Poland itself began. The PPS was hoping to use the Russo-Japanese war in order launch an all-out anti-Russian rebellion in the Kingdom. To this end, Piłsudski travelled to Tokyo in July 1904, in hope of coordinating his plans with the Japanese and getting arms and funding for the would-be Polish fighters. Learning of Piłsudski's mission, Dmowski himself also rushed to Tokyo, in order to undermine his rival's plans which, he feared, would end in a needless bloodbath reminiscent of 1863. Nonetheless, between April 1904 and October 1905, the Japanese provided the PPS with some 33,430 pounds, which greatly helped the party in arming its militia. Potkański, *Odrodzenie czynu niepodległościowego*, 56.

¹² Michał Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat* (Warszawa: Instytut Badania Najnowszej Historji Polski, 1936), 196.

¹³ The Bund (The General Jewish Labor Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia or *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland*) was the Jewish socialist party. The Bund viewed the Jews as a separate nation and imagined their continued national existence within a democratic Russia. The SDKPiL (*Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy* or the Social Democracy of the Polish Kingdom and Lithuania) was an internationalist socialist party which included a large number of assimilated Polish Jews, and which believed that the Polish proletariat should abandon the struggle for independence and focus on class struggle within the framework of the existing state system. Both parties opposed the PPS' demands for national independence for Poland, which led to frequent conflicts.

¹⁴ According to Potkański, the military organization of the SDKPiL was no more than 10% the size of the PPS-Combat Organization. Potkański, *Odrodzenie czynu niepodległościowego*, 140.

¹⁵ Kawalec, *Roman Dmowski*, 95.

¹⁶ Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat*, 198.

¹⁷ The composition of the two working classes was also somewhat different, with Christian Poles predominating in large factories and heavy industry, and Jews in small workshops.

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- ¹⁸ Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 154.
- ¹⁹ The November 1 demonstration was perceived as “non-Polish” not only by the National Democrats but also by the PPS and, it seems, the majority of Varsovians. Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat*, 200.
- ²⁰ Kawalec, *Roman Dmowski*, 99, 103–104.
- ²¹ Bernard Singer, *Moje nalewki* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1959), 95–96.
- ²² The power of these urban myths was so great that after 100 years echoes of them persisted in my own family. However, I have not been unable to find any independent verification of their authenticity. According to Sobczak, who discussed this “legend,” there is no evidence of this event having actually taken place. Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 159.
- ²³ Theodore R. Weeks, “Polish ‘Progressive Anti-Semitism,’ 1905–1914,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 25, no. 2 (1995): 53.
- ²⁴ Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 157.
- ²⁵ Potkański, *Odrodzenie czynu niepodległościowego*, 152.
- ²⁶ The other exception was the official Russian newspaper, which was printed under police protection.
- ²⁷ Potkański, *Odrodzenie czynu niepodległościowego*, 153.
- ²⁸ According to Sokolnicki, the PPS was the “chief victim” of Endek militias. Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat*, 285. Conversely, Dmowski’s biographer, Krzysztof Kawalec, stresses the conflict between the National Democrats and the SDKPiL. Kawalec, *Roman Dmowski*, 103–104.
- ²⁹ Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat*, 285.
- ³⁰ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 195.
- ³¹ Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat*, 207.
- ³² Singer, *Moje nalewki*, 105–106.
- ³³ Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 156.
- ³⁴ Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat*, 286.
- ³⁵ “Wybory,” *Prawda* May 5, 1906 cited in Stephen D. Corrsin, “Polish-Jewish Relations Before the First World War: The Case of the State Duma Elections in Warsaw,” *Gal-Ed: On the History of the Jews in Poland* 11 (1989): 40.
- ³⁶ Apparently only 19,000 of Warsaw’s Jews turned out to vote. Konrad Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej* (Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2005), 65.
- ³⁷ Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 171.
- ³⁸ Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 165. It was signed by Dmowski and Balicki, among others.
- ³⁹ Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Anti-Semitism: The “Jewish Question” in Poland, 1850–1914* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 146.
- ⁴⁰ Stephen D. Corrsin, *Warsaw Before the First World War: Poles and Jews in the Third City of the Russian Empire, 1880–1914* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1989), 88.
- ⁴¹ Mirosław Wierzchowski, *Sprawy Polski w III i IV Dumie Państwowej*. (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1966), 198–199.

⁴² Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 195.

⁴³ Corrsin, *Warsaw Before the First World War*, 90.

⁴⁴The Endek solution to this problem was to limit Jewish the proportion of Jews in self government to 20%, in towns where they constituted a majority, and to 10% in towns where they did not. Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 187.

⁴⁵ Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 194.

⁴⁶ Cited in Corrsin, *Warsaw Before the First World War*, 91.

⁴⁷ In the early 20th century, the Jews still faced a number of discriminatory legal measures in the Russian Empire. In the Polish Kingdom, these were repealed by the short-lived insurrectionary government of 1863, and not all of them were reintroduced when the Russians regained control.

⁴⁸ The election of a Jewish candidate was not a problem since in the industrial city of Łódź the majority of eligible voters were also Jewish, and there was little Christian Poles could do to stop the election of the Jewish candidate, Dr. Majer Bomasz.

⁴⁹ Corrsin, "Polish-Jewish Relations," 48.

⁵⁰ Singer, *Moje nalewki*, 166.

⁵¹ Robert Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Warsaw," *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 2 (June 2001): 297.

⁵² Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 194–195.

⁵³ Kozicki, *Pamiętnik*, 264.

⁵⁴ Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism," 298.

⁵⁵ Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism," 300.

⁵⁶ At least in theory, though clearly not always in practice, the National Democrats' ethic of national egoism appeared to be "irreconcilable" with the Christian ethics championed by the Church. This state of affairs would change somewhat with Dmowski's (most likely tactical) moderation of Endek doctrines which began as early 1923 and culminated in *The Church, the Nation, and State*, published in 1926. For more on this question see Porter, *Faith and fatherland*, 179–183, 232–234, 240. See also Paweł Stachowiak, *Korzenie "katolicyzmu endeckiego": Nacjonalistyczna wizja religii i kościoła w Polsce w latach 1887-1927* (Poznań: Wydaw. Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Nauk Humanistycznych i Dziennikarstwa, 1999).

⁵⁷ Corrsin, *Warsaw Before the First World War*, 102.

⁵⁸ Weeks, *From Assimilation to Anti-Semitism*, 166.

⁵⁹ Singer, *Moje nalewki*, 167.

⁶⁰ Weeks, "Polish 'Progressive Antisemitism,' 1905-1914," 65.

⁶¹ Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism."

⁶² Singer, *Moje nalewki*, 167.

⁶³ Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism," 302.

⁶⁴ Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism," 302.

⁶⁵ Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism," 305. Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*, 212.

⁶⁶ Weeks, *From Assimilation to Anti-Semitism*, 153.

⁶⁷ See Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*.

⁶⁸ Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*, 385.

⁶⁹ Kawalec, *Roman Dmowski*, 216.

⁷⁰ Zdanowski's memoirs quoted in Kawalec, *Roman Dmowski*, 232.

CHAPTER IV

The Intellectual Underpinnings of Polish Civic Nationalism 1905-1918

As the title of Dmowski's paradigmatic work, *The Thoughts of a Modern Pole*, suggests, the National Democrats saw themselves as being the only true representatives of "modern" Polish national identity, and they thoroughly opposed what they saw as the archaic "romantic" patriotism of earlier generations. Today many scholars have implicitly accepted this National Democratic claim at face value, and see the NDs as the only representatives of modern Polish nationalism. The National Democrats' enemies are alternately portrayed as the nostalgic, even if admirable, holdovers from an earlier romantic insurrectionary tradition or as socialists, for whom class allegiances ultimately trumped national ones.

Yet, if we strip the term nationalism of its emotional baggage, and accept its most basic analytical definition (according to which nationalism is a doctrine which holds that the nation needs an independent state of its own), then we cannot sustain the claim that the National Democrats were the only, or even the most important, spokesmen of Polish nationalism.¹ Indeed, while the NDs explicitly rejected sustained struggle for national independence, important political forces on the left of the political spectrum made this struggle their priority, in both theory and practice. As Brian Porter-Szűcs has argued, the

development of the “modern” conception of the nation was “hotly contested and its victory was by no means assured.”² While Porter- Szűcs traces this process of contestation until the 1905 Revolution, the fierce discursive struggle over the meaning of the Polish nation continued well into the interwar period and wasn’t fully settled even by the outbreak of World War II.

Piłsudczyks, Socialists, and the Patriotic Left

The chief rivals of the National Democrats in “the struggle for soul of the Polish nation” were the followers of Marshall Józef Piłsudski, usually referred to as the *Piłsudczyks* (Piłsudskiites).³ Insofar as scholars have dealt with the discursive alternative to National Democratic nationalism, they have tended to limit themselves to the personal beliefs of Piłsudski. The broad outlines of Piłsudski’s own vision of Poland are repeated so often as to be almost cliché, but they are very seldom analyzed. Thus the Marshall is most often portrayed as a traditional or even anachronistic patriot, who represents what was best in the multicultural traditions of the early modern Commonwealth, as these are encapsulated in the famous adage *gente Ruthenus natione Polonus*. As Timothy Snyder summarizes it, Piłsudski’s “patriotism was founded not upon a modern or linguistic definition of Poland but upon nostalgic republican ideas of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which he opposed to a historical notion of an autocratic Russia.”⁴ In Polish historiography, Piłsudski’s conception of Poland is often called “federalist” because it

invariably involved creating some kind of federal multinational arrangement, under implicit Polish hegemony, on the lands of the Commonwealth.⁵

There is no doubt that the image of Piłsudski as a nostalgic patriot of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth contains many elements of truth. But there is also plenty of evidence to support the opposite claim—that Piłsudski’s commitment to what we would today call multiculturalism was instrumental or, at best, only partially sincere.⁶ The goal of this chapter, however, is not to analyze Piłsudski, who has certainly received his fair share of attention from historians, biographers, and hagiographers. Whatever Piłsudski himself may or may not have thought, believed, or felt, the far more interesting question concerns his followers, who with his support articulated a sophisticated theoretical justification of their brand of patriotism, which was not simply a restatement of the tenets of 19th century romantic nationalism, and which was neither as nostalgic nor quite as “civic” as is generally assumed. This discourse, despite being readily accessible in Piłsudczyk publications, has not been subjected to any serious critical scrutiny in the literature.

There is no denying that scholars’ failure to delve deeper into the nature of what may be called “Piłsudczyk nationalism” plays a useful role in constructing tidy historical narratives.⁷ Presenting Piłsudski as a paragon of civic patriotism and toleration, and the embodiment of the Polish multicultural tradition, draws a tidy and convenient dichotomy between his views and those of the National Democrats. In other words, Piłsudski plays the good, inclusive patriot against Dmowski’s evil, exclusive nationalist. Thus in almost

all accounts Piłsudski emerges as a quaint and idiosyncratic romantic, leading a group of followers bound together by nothing more than his personal charisma. But were Piłsudski's followers, the men who constructed modern Poland, all anachronistic patriots of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania? If so, how were they able to win a mass following among the Poles? And if not, then what made them, along with millions of others, follow Piłsudski? Personal loyalty should not be used as an all explaining analytical magic wand.⁸ Indeed, the most puzzling aspect of Polish historiography on this subject is the fixation on Piłsudski himself to the utter neglect of his followers, who *had* in fact put forth a convincing, sophisticated, and quintessentially modern exposition of their vision of the imagined community of the Polish nation. While there are a number of works dealing with the policies of the "Piłsudski camp" in specific areas, there is not a single study which can be said to seriously engage its political thought and examine its vision of the Polish national community.⁹

Any analysis of Piłsudczyk political thought must begin with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which has already been discussed in Chapter II. The importance of the PPS in Polish history is twofold. First, as a well-organized, mass based, working class party, the PPS would play a critical role in Polish politics in its own right throughout the interwar years. Second, the PPS can be seen as the nucleus of a larger and more nebulous political "orientation" (*orientacja*) as contemporaries called it, known as the Patriotic Left. This broad umbrella grouping included other parties, informal networks, paramilitary formations, and independent political figures. Not all of these groups could necessarily be described as "socialist," but the vast majority had their intellectual or organizational roots

in the PPS, and shared many elements of its program. In the first years of Polish independence, this broad coalition, loosely grouped around the charismatic leadership of Piłsudski, would challenge the National Democrats' attempts to lay sole claim to representing Polish patriotism.

As we have seen in Chapter II, the first PPS programs called for the recreation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in its 1772 boundaries as a democratic federation and demanded "the full equality of all the nationalities inhabiting the Commonwealth."¹⁰ The unspoken assumption was that these nationalities will undoubtedly want to join a Polish-led federation precisely because it would offer them freedom. Such an outlook was indeed inherited from the romantics and, arguably, was nostalgic and even naïve. However, as we will see, the political thought of the Polish left, and more specifically of the followers of Piłsudski, who were to provide leadership for the left until 1926, was not static. While the 1905 Revolution marked a high point for socialism in Polish society, it also forced the socialists to grapple with a multitude of hitherto unforeseen questions. Within the PPS, debates over tactics prompted fundamental fissures. For Piłsudski and much of the party's old guard, known as the "old ones," the defeats of the revolution showed the impotence of unorganized action by the masses against the military might of the modern state. This tactical assessment reinforced their disdain for cosmopolitan socialists and pre-existing commitment to Polish patriotism and its insurrectionary tradition. The answer, Piłsudski believed, was to engage the Russian forces militarily in the tradition of the Polish insurrections. At the same time, experiences gained during the revolution convinced many PPS activists that emphasizing patriotism was the surest way

to win hearts the hearts of Polish workers and guarantee the party success.¹¹ This reemphasis of the party's patriotic (or nationalist) dimension raised fierce opposition from a younger group of activists who became known as the PPS-Left, and eventually led to a schism within the party in 1906.¹²

The split within the PPS foreshadowed Piłsudski's eventual departure from the party (and from socialism), and his full-time dedication to the cause of national independence. In fact, even though the larger of the two PPS organizations remained firmly committed to the question of national independence, Piłsudski and his closest followers soon went even further and began to organize non-partisan clandestine military units for an eventual armed showdown with the Tsarist state.¹³

At the same time, the postulate of creating a single democratic state for all the nationalities of the old Republic was beginning to look increasingly idealistic and untenable in the face of intensifying national movements among its former constituent peoples, especially the Ukrainians, but also the Lithuanians and Jews. With the increasing commitment to patriotism, and continued de-emphasis of socialism's internationalist dimension, the followers of Piłsudski (and the Polish left more broadly) faced a growing need to clearly define their own political vision and defend themselves from critics on both the right and left.

Could the twin commitments to independence within the 1772 boundaries of the Republic and justice for all the other peoples who lived in that area, be reconciled? The National Democrats, who openly proclaimed to care *only* about the welfare of the Poles,

were at least consistent in their position. So were the internationalist socialists of the SDKPiL and PPS-Left, who rejected the particular national aspirations of the Poles in favor of universal justice, “international brotherhood,” and unabridged cosmopolitanism. The PPS and the followers of Piłsudski were left in a somewhat unstable intermediate position. Of course, the heritage of Romantic nationalism, insurrectionary struggles, and so-called “noble republicanism” of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth was readily available in crafting a new synthesis of patriotism and social radicalism, and is universally recognized as forming a key dimension of the Piłsudczyks’ worldview. But the Piłsudczyks did *not* actually return to metaphysical, mystical, Messianic, or romantic conceptions of the nation. And it is misleading, as scholars too often do, to explain the national identity of Piłsudski and his followers solely in those terms.

While it is true that in his post-PPS days, Piłsudski himself never attempted to formulate a cohesive worldview or ideology for his followers’ consumption, historians go too far when they argue that “aside from independence, he had no political program whatsoever.”¹⁴ In reality, as Józef Osiński points out, even though Piłsudski purposefully distanced himself from theoretical concerns, he “placed the burden of formulating them on the shoulders of his followers.”¹⁵ Two journals in particular, *Rząd i Wojsko* (Government and Army) and *Droga* (The Way) became veritable “forums of Piłsudczyk ideology.”¹⁶ Both journals were created and edited by Adam Skwarczyński, a man described as one of the most influential figures of the Second Republic and the “ideologue of the Piłsudski camp.”¹⁷

Yet, Skwarczyński is almost entirely forgotten today and insofar as his work is discussed, it is treated superficially and without a deeper theoretical grounding.¹⁸ Part of the reason for this state of affairs is that Skwarczyński's political thought is rooted in the political philosophy of Stanisław Brzozowski. Indeed, as I will attempt to show in the remainder of this chapter, the thought of Skwarczyński, and other important Piłsudczyk theorists such as Janusz Jędrzejewicz, is virtually incomprehensible without reference to Brzozowski. This may explain why scholars who failed to connect Piłsudczyk ideology to Brzozowski's thought have almost entirely missed the former's sophistication and significance.

The “National Realism” of Stanisław Brzozowski

It is my contention that no serious discussion of Piłsudczyk nationalism, as it was articulated by its key exponents in the 1920s, can take place without reference to the heterodox Marxist theorist Stanisław Brzozowski.¹⁹ Brzozowski, who died at the age of 30 in 1911, nevertheless managed to leave behind a staggering amount of writing. During his relatively brief life, he underwent a number of intellectual transformations. While it is impossible to analyze all his views here, or give an account of his intellectual development, the most important aspect of Brzozowski's thought for our purposes is his transition from a position of cosmopolitan socialism to an acknowledgement of the key role of nations, or national cultures, in human life.

In this respect, Brzozowski was an exemplar as much as a forerunner of the intellectual trend which, as we saw, was gripping the entire right-wing of the PPS, the followers of Piłsudski, and the Polish left. However, even if Brzozowski's intellectual evolution may have been to some extent concurrent with that of the Piłsudczyks, his thought provided the theoretical grounding on the basis of which others, like Skwarczyński, would be able to coherently argue the positions they may have arrived at independently. As we will see, key terms utilized by the Piłsudczyks, like service (*służba*), creativity (*twórczość*), and labor (*praca*) are either incomprehensible or sound like facile slogans without reference to Brzozowski.

Today, Brzozowski is remembered chiefly as the precursor of Gramsci and so-called humanist Marxism.²⁰ Indeed, his Marxism was so starkly modern, almost post-modern, that he was largely misunderstood and ignored by his contemporaries.²¹ In contrast to most of his contemporary Marxists, who subscribed to the economic determinism of Marx's later writings, Brzozowski emphasized the problem of alienation. Marxism's importance, according to Brzozowski, lay in its freeing man from abstract idealism and setting philosophy on the concrete ground of economic reality, and actual *lived experience*. Man's alienation from his own labor was a crucial component of the experience of modernity, but it did not necessarily point the way towards the future in a teleological manner. For Brzozowski, Marxism was not a prophecy, or much less a social "science"; it was a tool used to interpret and change the present.

Brzozowski was a radical constructivist and, in this respect, is more reminiscent of our contemporaries of than of his own generation. Nature and science, he wrote, were constituted historically. The social world, including all knowledge, was the product of past human productivity and labor. Yet, there was one value which saved his thought from relativism and provided a firm foundation from which to think about one's place in the world and responsibility for the latter—that value was labor itself. All the life worlds inhabited by human beings had been constructed in different historical circumstances but always through hard labor and struggle with the non-human forces of nature.

The daily grind of labor, or the participation in the struggle against the non-human world, gave life its ultimate meaning. “Whoever exists in his daily life, all the while holding it in contempt,” Brzozowski wrote, should “be excluded, by his own conscience, from taking part in shaping collective human consciousness.”²² Yet, Western culture had nothing but contempt for the daily grind of labor, even though the latter made its very existence possible. Instead of giving the act of labor its proper place in the hierarchy of values, Westerners sought transcendental truths that were said to lie beyond the real world. This was true even of Marxism, with its pseudo-scientific, but in reality romantic, teleology. According to Brzozowski, like it or not, human beings were inextricably bound to the physical world, and only labor, understood as the active struggle against nature, could maintain our continued existence.²³ To ignore this fundamental fact of human life was sheer hypocrisy and bad faith. It was a lie in which consciousness ignored its own “bio-psychological,” as Brzozowski put it, foundations in nature.²⁴

For Brzozowski, any form of idealism, determinism, or teleology was a conceit of the psyche attempting to find for itself a vantage point beyond the necessity of labor and life in the real world. Labor, defined as practical, lasting, and consequential human activity, was the “only support of man in the universe.”²⁵ The negation of this basic truth, he argued, was at the heart of romanticism, which he defined very broadly as the attempt to erect for the psyche a vantage point beyond the physical necessity of labor. Romantic consciousness, according to Brzozowski, “denied the value of those very activities, which made possible the existence of human societies which, in turn, supported that very consciousness.”²⁶ All the major philosophical schools of the 19th century, including all purveyors of determinism, were representatives of romanticism understood in this sense.²⁷

Yet, despite this scathing critique, Brzozowski accepted, albeit in a qualified manner, the Polish romanticism of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and the Great Emigration, which he saw as being fundamentally different from other literary manifestations of romanticism in Europe. In fact, though he was extremely critical of Polish culture in general, he went so far as to argue that Polish romanticism constituted the one “real revelation, won by our nation for all humanity.”²⁸ The reason for Brzozowski’s endorsement of the Polish romantics lies in their emphasis on human agency and the call for sociopolitical action rather than, as he saw it, introspective navel gazing which characterized romanticism in other cultures. The model of collective action advocated by the Polish romantics appealed to Brzozowski precisely because it offered a convincing

escape from the determinism which he saw as dominating all of German philosophy, including Marxism.

To live in good faith, then, was to accept responsibility for *this* life, in all its physicality, corporality, ugliness, and strife, and to *act* in the world. Indeed, it is the emphasis on the importance of the individual creative act in history that sets Brzozowski apart from other Marxists. But act to what end? What did this mean in practice? In answering this question, Brzozowski's views underwent a profound evolution between 1905 and his death in 1911. While his earlier ideas echoed Marx in their universalism and focus on class struggle, it was his preoccupation with understanding the actual lived experience of human beings that led him to question the possibility of true universalism and, in the end, to embrace the particularism of national cultures.

In his early writings Brzozowski was a scathing critic of the National Democrats and their brand of nationalistic chauvinism, a position which he never moderated.²⁹ His most forceful attack on the NDs can be found in his 1906 article entitled "The All-Polish Leprosy" (*Trąd Wszepocholski*) in reference to the "All-Polish Review" (*Przegląd Wszepocholski*), the Endeks' chief organ at the time. In the article he accused the NDs of wanting Polish independence just so that they could erect "their own scaffolds," in place of Russian or German ones.³⁰ And as late as 1910 he wrote the following words, presciently attacking the new Polish and German nationalisms:

These hysterical neurasthenics believe that they somehow resemble the ancient Teutons ... and soon no doubt in Cracow some new café-based [King Bolesław] Chrobry movement will arise, claiming that Chrobry was a

forerunner of Nietzsche ... or that Stefan Czarnecki was 'an individual who knew how to live dangerously.'³¹

Brzozowski's reference to Chrobry was almost prophetic—in the interwar period the National Democrats adapted the mythical sword of King Bolesław Chrobry as their symbol, almost along the lines of the German Swastika.

Brzozowski remained to the very end of his life opposed to any kind of biological racism, chauvinism, and anti-Semitism. Yet in his very last book, he claims to have arrived at a position which he called "modern national realism."³² What did this mean? And how can it be understood in the context of his scathing condemnation of the nationalists? Probably the best place to begin to understand Brzozowski's views on the subject of nationality is his discussion of Russian culture in an article entitled "The Crisis in Russian Literature."³³ Unlike most Poles of his generation, Brzozowski was not anti-Russian though, like them, he considered the Tsarist government to be terrible and barbaric. But he was fascinated by Russian literature, which he saw as far superior to its Polish counter-part, and admired individual Russians as diverse as the liberal Alexander Herzen and the famously conservative and anti-Polish Dostoyevsky.³⁴

Brzozowski begins his reflections on Russian culture with a general observation of the socially constructed nature of reality:

There is no such thing as a non-national or international self, or non-national or international art or literature. Every little bit of the human soul is a moment in the history of the nation in which that soul was created. ... It is a terrible law of history, and I myself sinned against it in my writings as I was coming to realize it: the self, expressing itself in thought, acts in the world through not through its own will and not in the direction chosen by itself; it works through the socio-historical world which created it and into

which its living consequences return. The individual acts in the world through the prism and gravity of its nation.³⁵

In contemporary terms, then, Brzozowski was arguing that the individual is inextricably rooted in and conditioned by the context of her culture and that it is impossible to ever truly transcend the conceptual universe created by that (national) culture. Thus, the great weakness of 19th century Russian thought was its cosmopolitanism. The belief of Russian intellectuals, radicals and liberals alike, that they could deny real Russian life, rise above it, and owe nothing to it, was a conceited delusion. “In moments of true self-awareness,” Brzozowski wrote, “the Russian idealist must realize that it is the particular Russian history which constitutes his true reality.” It is only by affirming and working within this reality and eschewing “abstract dogmas of all brands” imported from the West, that Russia will be able to genuinely move forward.³⁶

This understanding, according to Brzozowski, lay at the heart of Dostoyevsky’s greatness. Dostoyevsky had the courage to see the real Russia and Russians for what they were, and fully embraced them as the material he had to work with in his socio-historical creation. “You are not beyond Russia,” Brzozowski writes to the Russian intellectual, “you are embedded in her and growing out of her, [so] get to know this true nature of your being and, once you have gotten to know it, have the courage to live in this terrible body, to work within it, and to walk forward with it.”³⁷ Dostoyevsky understood this, and this is why, according to Brzozowski, he accepted Orthodoxy and Russian mysticism—it was a part of his project to live in the real life world of Russian culture.³⁸

While Brzozowski was writing about Russia, his words also explain his own relationship to the Polish nation and his position of “national realism,” which he put forth in an article about the literary critic and revolutionary leader Maurycy Mochnacki. Brzozowski considered Mochnacki, who died in 1834, to be the most “modern” man in Polish history. To fully understand Brzozowski’s endorsement of the national, we must first understand what he saw as the source of Mochnacki’s greatness. In Brzozowski’s presentation, Mochnacki fully understood himself to be the product of a particular nation and a particular history. Today, we would have called him a social constructivist. Armed with this insight, he expanded all his energies to gain true self-knowledge by critically analyzing and mastering the cultural and historical context of which he was the product. But this self-understanding didn’t prompt him to move “beyond” the nation and assume a position of internationalism or (what we would today call) cultural relativism. Nor did it lead him to subsume his own individual responsibility within “some kind of murky national mysticism,” as the National Democrats were doing in Brzozowski’s own day.³⁹

Mochnacki moved in a still different direction. The nation and its traditions weren’t idols, gods, or vehicles of transcendence; they were the materials for his own individual, active, self-conscious, and creative “historical construction.”⁴⁰ Paradoxical though it may initially seem, this Nietzschean emphasis on individual creation (*twórczość*) is absolutely key to understanding Brzozowski’s endorsement of “national realism.” Later, it will later play an equally prominent role for the Piłsudczyks. For Brzozowski, national cultures were “real” in the sense that they shaped and, ultimately, created the individual. But in turn they also constituted the canvass or raw materials for

individual action and creation. Mochnacki utilized the traditions of the Polish nobility, despite being painfully aware of all their shortcomings and imperfections, because they were the only instrument available to him in “creating man and constructing history.”⁴¹ He *used* them fully consciously, in order to amplify his own will, power, and capacity for historical creation. His goal, as Brzozowski put it, was “to break into history” and leave his individual mark on the collective work of generations.⁴²

And this is precisely where Mochnacki’s greatness lies. Unlike Mickiewicz, Słowacki, or subsequent Polish romantics, who sought salvation in transcendental historiosophical teleologies and deterministic grand narratives, Mochnacki was fully aware that only his own action could change the world, and that it would be effective only if it was based on “real” and concrete foundations. Nations, or national cultures, were “real” not in any objective sense, but because they shaped the lives and identities of millions of Europeans of his era. To believe that reason could provide us with an escape from (national) culture was as futile as believing that we could somehow think ourselves out of our own physiology. This was why, to Brzozowski, Mochnacki epitomized a modern European – “a conscious creator of and participant in the nation.” This was the only real position a truly self-aware thinker could take—all transnational identities were nothing but “avatars of sentimentalism and abstraction.”⁴³

Brzozowski also appreciated the emancipatory potential offered by the social glue that was national culture—nations could be thought of as “organism of labor,” which if properly steered could unite millions of people towards a common life-affirming goal. But he was always aware of nationalism’s darker side. He sought strength and glorified

willpower, but not at the expense of the loss of individual responsibility. This is why he rejected racism, tribalism, biological determinism, sentimentalism, and any form of national mysticism that allowed the individual to relinquish responsibility for his actions. Brzozowski's hero, Mochnecki, knew that human life was fundamentally irrational but he nevertheless tried to harness this irrationality and make use of it in a conscious, constructive, and rational manner, rather than surrendering to it.⁴⁴

Brzozowski's own life unfolded in a deeply tragic manner. Accused of leaking confidential information about the Polish student movement to the Tsarist secret police, he spent his last years in exile and utter poverty, rejected by most of his former friends and comrades from the PPS. Yet, although he is still poorly known in Poland (and almost totally unknown anywhere else), his writings have exerted a tremendous influence on the country's intellectual elite, especially on the left. He has been cited as an influence by Czesław Miłosz, Adam Michnik and, most recently, the *Krytyka Polityczna* group. Yet, his influence on the political philosophy of the Piłsudczyks has *never* been adequately highlighted, let alone analyzed.⁴⁵

But there is no doubt that Brzozowski was a major influence on a generation of left-leaning young Poles who did not want to break with patriotism and accept Marxist economic determinism. As Tadeusz Katelbach, later a prominent Piłsudczyk, reminisced of his youthful intellectual encounter with Brzozowski:

[His work] was a revelation and a consolation. I felt that I finally found the right synthesis of my own sociopolitical views, or rather preferences. From the perspective of social justice, Brzozowski stood on the side of the working class without any reservations, but he equally strongly emphasized

the unbreakable, as he said, irrational bond uniting the individual with history, man with the nation, and with the latter's past and present.⁴⁶

In sum, while the extent to which Brzozowski's work was understood by his contemporaries can be debated, there is no doubt that it had an impact on young Poles who were looking for a doctrine capable of providing a coherent synthesis of patriotism and socialism.

Adam Skwarczyński and the "Progressive" Justification of Patriotism

The unofficial ideologue of the Piłsudski movement was Adam Skwarczyński. Born, like Piłsudski, Brzozowski and many leading representatives of the Polish left, into a dislocated and relatively impoverished noble family, Skwarczyński shared many of the same formative influences—chief among them romantic poetry. His early career was that of a paradigmatic Piłsudczyk. In 1908 he became involved in Piłsudski's non-partisan Union of Active Combat (*Związek Walki Czynnej*), which operated in Galicia with the aim of preparing the Poles for an armed conflict with Russian Empire. In 1909 he joined the PPS, and began writing for the journal *Promień* (Ray of Light) in which Piłsudski and Brzozowski had also published.

Looking at Skwarczyński's early conception of the nation, there is little doubt of the extraordinary influence exerted upon him by Brzozowski. Skwarczyński articulated this conception in two articles published in consecutive issues of *Promień*. The first one, entitled "The National and International Position of our Organization," responded to internationalist socialists, who rejected the Polish patriotism of the PPS as heterodox.⁴⁷

The second, “Questions of Polish Patriotism,” was directed at critics on the right and sought to refute the opposite charge—that the PPS lacked patriotism.⁴⁸ Between the two, Skwarczyński articulated a coherent conception of the nation to which, as we will see, he would remain faithful for the rest of his life.

The first article is probably less interesting, since it basically recapitulates the PPS position articulated by thinkers like Bolesław Limanowski and Stanisław Mendelson in the last decades of the 19th century.⁴⁹ “We believe,” Skwarczyński began, “that only the independence and unification of Poland can be counted as her true liberation, that freedom and equality should also reign within [Poland], and we see people of different nationalities as brothers, as long as they call for the independence of peoples and respect our ideals.”⁵⁰ This, in other words, was the romantic nationalism of Mickiewicz. But there was also an entirely new element to Skwarczyński’s argumentation, which can partly be attributed to the influence of Brzozowski. Skwarczyński wrote:

We do not live somewhere between Sirius and Orion but amidst Polish society, among masses of Polish workers and students. We want to have an influence on the youth, for our voice to be heard in this society. We can accomplish this only by identifying ourselves as Poles.⁵¹

In other words, like Brzozowski, Skwarczyński argued that Polishness was not some ideological superstructure but constituted the real, “concrete,” as Brzozowski might have said, life world of the Polish masses. To ignore this social fact was to become politically irrelevant. But the acceptance of Polishness was not simply tactical. Again following Brzozowski, Skwarczyński came to accept the fact that Polish culture constituted the concrete lived experience for *himself* as much as for “the masses” which he sought to win

for his cause. “For a young Pole, the desire for a free fatherland is not some political slogan, but an ethical, moral value, like personal dignity,” he wrote.⁵² As a “moral value” the question of national identity was ultimately irrational and beyond tactical or utilitarian calculations.

But this does not mean that Skwarczyński was moving towards the National Democratic ideal of the moral primacy of the nation or coming to embrace the doctrine of national egoism. To understand what differentiated Skwarczyński’s position from that of the NDs, it is necessary to take a closer look at the article in which he sought to rebut those who attacked the PPS as “anti-national.” Skwarczyński defined nationalism in the following manner:

The key rule of nationalism is that the national interest is the leading criteria for all individual actions and especially for politics. The nation, understood as a unitary whole, becomes an end in itself, and all desires, whether of social classes or individuals, must be subordinated to the interest of the whole. There is no higher ideal for political action beyond or above the nation. There is only a finite amount of goods in the world and the goal is to get as many of these as possible for one’s own nation. What consequences this will have for other nations and for the progress of humanity as whole ... cannot be of interest to the nationalist politician, who believes only in national egoism.⁵³

Skwarczyński vehemently rejected this position. “Positing the interest of the nation as the highest ideal of human activity amounts to a fundamental negation of life and creativity,” he wrote.⁵⁴ The end of an individual’s life was, in fact, “creativity, the acquisition of ever higher forms of culture, and the opening of new horizons of reality.” This admittedly sounds rather vague. But since words like “creation” and “creativity,”

would continue to be central to his thought, it is important to look into their meaning more deeply.

In fact, at the heart of Skwarczyński's understanding of "creativity" (*twórczość*) was Brzozowski's philosophy of labor. The struggle of the PPS, Skwarczyński writes, was not only about the equitable distribution of goods but, more importantly, about "the intrinsic value of liberated and self-possessed labor, the key element of all culture and creation."⁵⁵ Labor, as for Brzozowski, was fundamentally understood as man's eternal struggle with the non-human world. The nation, for Skwarczyński, is both a product of this struggle and a key tool in our ability to continue to wage it. His definition of the nation shows this quite clearly:

The progressive, revolutionary, socialist justification of patriotism depends on the recognition of the nation as the only basis for creating human values, and the best possible conditions for work, creativity, and development. ... A nation is not something stable and closed within itself, but is the product of constant labor and creation, and is defined by the ... unique character of this collective labor. Therefore the nation cannot be the goal of human activity, but is the result of this activity, which is always carried out with a view to universal values. The nation is a form ... of human collective activity; a form which makes further activity possible. A common language, literature and art, a common state, common economic organizations, etc, are all tools which allow the people of one tribe to undertake further work on the development, transformation, and creation of new values. In short, the nation is the product of past creation, and the basis of future creation. ... Truly fruitful and responsible labor can only take place within an independent state ... not dependent on the decisions of a foreign government or foreign social forces, which we cannot influence through our efforts.⁵⁶

There are a number of striking features in this definition. The first is its radical social constructivism. Nations are historical constructs, whose importance in human life is based on their historical role and not on any essential qualities. Thus, while Skwarczyński

talks of “foreign” governments or social forces, the term should not be understood in an essentialist or reifying manner. The problem is that the Russian government does not, and cannot, understand the life experience of the Poles, which has been historically shaped in a radically different manner than that of the Russians.⁵⁷

The second striking feature of Skwarczyński’s patriotism is its universalism. As for Brzozowski, the nation is a vehicle or tool which enhances man’s capacity to labor creatively and to act in the world. But the nation does not itself point the way towards the *ends* of human action, which must always be carried out with a view to the enhancement of human life as such and not just the life of a particular people, especially if it were to take place at someone else’s expense.

Skwarczyński went on to argue that this was the view of Mickiewicz and the romantics.⁵⁸ But his reference to Mickiewicz should not obscure important differences between his thought and Polish romanticism. Most importantly, Mickiewicz and Polish romanticism rested their hopes for the “resurrection” of Poland on a metaphysical foundation. For Skwarczyński, on the other hand, there is no teleology or promise of a future utopia, whether romantic or Marxist. History makes no promises and neither does the nation. Rather, we live in a world constructed solely by human efforts. The Polish nation for Skwarczyński, like for Brzozowski, was neither a social organism nor a historiosophical force, but a cultural product with no necessary transcendent value. What differentiated him from the majority of constructivists, however, is that Skwarczyński nations *were* real, and important, precisely *because* they were rich and deeply textured

cultural constructs. As we will see, Skwarczyński remained faithful to this view of nation throughout his life.

From the outbreak of WWI, Skwarczyński's biography is emblematic of Piłsudski's closest followers, who would later play key leadership roles in the Second Republic. At the outbreak of the war he joined Piłsudski's Legions, and fought as an officer in the famed First Brigade until 1916. When Piłsudski shifted focus from the Legions to the secret Polish Military Organization (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa* or POW), he sent Skwarczyński to Warsaw in order to organize political backing for the group. There, he formed deep friendships with many men who would later play key role in the Polish state and contribute significantly to the elaboration of Piłsudczyk ideology. Key among them were Tadeusz Hołówko, Janusz Jędrzejewicz, Kazimierz Świtalski, Aleksander Prystor, and Stanisław Thugutt.

Once in Warsaw, Skwarczyński promptly began to organize a press organ for the Piłsudczyk movement. On September 29, 1916, he was able to publish the first issue of *Rząd i Wojsko* (Government and Army). It is noteworthy to point out the audacity of its title, since at the time Poland had not had anything close to either a government or an army since 1830! Although Skwarczyński himself was soon arrested by the Germans along with scores of other high ranking Piłsudczyks, and *Rząd i Wojsko* appeared only intermittently under German occupation, it immediately raised its head after independence. During its existence it was widely considered to be the "official" publication of the Piłsudczyk movement.⁵⁹ In independent Poland, *Rząd i Wojsko*

changed its name to *Droga* (The Way), which continued to be edited by Skwarczyński and regarded as the theoretical mouthpiece of the followers of Piłsudski.⁶⁰ As we will see in the next chapter, the understanding of the role and importance of the nation articulated by Brzozowski and taken up by Skwarczyński, would continue to inform the political thought of the followers of Piłsudski in independent Poland.

The influence of Brzozowski, along with its Nietzschean emphasis on “creativity,” is particularly important because it will help explain the flexibility (and instability) of the Piłsudczyks’ conception of the nation. It will also help us understand their de-emphasis, and eventual abandonment, of the multicultural or civic conception of Poland. To be sure, the memory of the Commonwealth was more than a whimsical idiosyncratic dream of Piłsudski himself—it was part of a deep and sophisticated political vision. But it was not an unconditional ideological commitment, in the sense in which the dream of an ethnic Poland constituted a veritable dogma for the NDs. While it is difficult to tell precisely the extent to which Piłsudski himself shared the worldview expounded by Skwarczyński, in his most candid writings the Marshall appeared to be very close to it.⁶¹ More importantly, it must have had his tacit approval since, as we will see in the next chapter, his followers continued to expound in independent Poland.

¹ Ernest Gellner famously defines nationalism as “a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.” Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

² Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 189.

³ Interestingly, both the followers of Piłsudski and the National Democrats thought of their mutual conflict as a struggle for the hearts and minds of the Poles, and especially

of the youth. For example: Marcelli Handelsman, “O program młodego pokolenia,” *Droga* February 1922, 13-24; Kozicki, *Pamiętnik*, 188.

⁴ Similarly, Dziewanowski writes, that “[Piłsudski’s] essentially practical approach to politics, his distaste for ideology, prevented him from formulating a federal program, let alone a federal theory. His federalism was not theoretical: it was more instinctive and pragmatic, derived, as it was, from a traditional respect for the diversity that surrounded him from his earliest days.” Dziewanowski, *Joseph Piłsudski*, 350.

⁵ For Polish federalist conceptions, see Piotr S. Wandycz, “Polish Federalism 1919-20 and Its Historical Antecedents,” *East European Quarterly* 4 (1970): 25-39. As his friend and collaborator, the linguist, ethnographer and diplomat Leon Wasielewski wrote, Piłsudski’s “plans in the east were tied to his conception of a ‘Great Poland,’ and demanded the liberal treatment of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Ukraine. Piłsudski contrasted this ‘Great Poland’ to the Endek conception of a ‘Small Poland,’ which was narrow and nationalistic, and which pushed the eastern neighbors away ...” Leon Wasielewski, *Józef Piłsudski jakim go znałem* (Warszawa: Rój, 1935), 172-3.

⁶ “I expect that in the next few days I will be able to open the door of our Belarusian and Lithuanian policy,” Piłsudski wrote to his friend Leon Wasielewski in 1919. “You know my views on these matters, which boil down to the fact that I want to be neither a federalist nor an imperialist, until I can talk about these matters somewhat seriously – that is with a gun in my pocket.” Quoted in Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej*, 14.

⁷ Many readers will no doubt cringe at my use of the adjective “Piłsudczyk” to modify the noun “nationalism.” Especially in Polish scholarship, the term “nationalism” carries a very negative normative valuation. Thus, “nationalists” are bad and hateful while “patriots” are nice and welcoming of diversity. I believe this distinction is not particularly useful analytically and that the normative load it carries leads us to see as entirely separate phenomena which in reality are quite similar.

⁸ In fact, loyalty is usually built on the foundation of common beliefs; this is why even those National Democrats who felt the appeal of Piłsudski’s personal charisma were usually able to resist it Kozicki, *Pamiętnik*, 392.

⁹ For attempts to implement Piłsudski’s “federalist” plans see Wandycz, “Polish Federalism”; Okulewicz, *Koncepcja “międzymorza”*; Dziewanowski, *Joseph Piłsudski*. However, these works do not address the theory behind Piłsudski’s *praxis*.

¹⁰ Quoted in Tych, *Polskie programy socjalistyczne*, 253.

¹¹ Sokolnicki, *Czternaście lat*, 263.

¹² At the 10th Party Congress, held in Vienna in November 1906, “young ones” were successful in capturing the Central Committee of the PPS, which prompted Piłsudski and his followers to pull out of the party and start their own splinter group. The “young ones” renamed their rump party the PPS-Left, while “old ones” called their splinter group the PPS-Revolutionary Fraction, in order to highlight their emphasis on armed struggle. See Teodor Ładyka, *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (Frakcja Rewolucyjna) w latach 1906-1914*. (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1972).

¹³ In the long run it was the “old ones” who emerged with the larger following and were more successful in appropriating the unhyphenated acronym PPS. The PPS-FR program, composed by Feliks Perl, demanded “in the political realm, the creation of an independent Polish Republic ... and in the national realm, the elimination of all national oppression.” Quoted in Bronisław Syzdek, ed., *Dokumenty Programowe Polskiego Ruchu Robotniczego* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1986), 69.

¹⁴ Andrzej Micewski, *W cieniu marszałka Piłsudskiego: szkice z dziejów myśli politycznej II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1968), 49.

¹⁵ Józef Osiński, “Wkład Janusza Jędrzejewicza w budowanie mitu polskiego bohatera narodowego – Józefa Piłsudskiego” (presented at the Międzynarodowa Konferencja Naukowa: Bohaterowie w historii i pamięci społeczeństw europejskich, Poznań, 2004), 2.

¹⁶ Osiński, “Wkład Janusza Jędrzejewicza w budowanie mitu polskiego bohatera narodowego,” 2.

¹⁷ Micewski, *W cieniu marszałka Piłsudskiego*, 62. So far only one publication dedicated to Adam Skwarczyński has appeared in print, and it is little more than a collection of his articles. Daria Nałęcz, ed., *Adam Skwarczyński--Od demokracji do autorytaryzmu* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Sejmowe, 1998).

¹⁸ To this day, the most insightful treatment of Skwarczyński remains Micewski’s chapter on the subject in *W cieniu marszałka Piłsudskiego*.

¹⁹ Despite being an important forerunner of “Marxist humanism,” Brzozowski is almost entirely unknown in the West. Michael D. Kennedy, “The Alternatives in Eastern Europe at Century’s Start: Brzozowski and Machajski on Intellectuals and Socialism,” *Theory and Society* 21, no. 5 (October 1992): 735.

²⁰ On Brzozowski see: Andrzej Mencwel, *Stanisław Brzozowski: kształtowanie myśli krytycznej* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1976); Czesław Miłosz, *Człowiek wśród skorpionów* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982); Walicki, *Stanisław Brzozowski: drogi myśli*; Andrzej Walicki, *Stanisław Brzozowski and the Polish Beginnings of “Western Marxism”* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

²¹ Miłosz, *Człowiek wśród skorpionów*, 6.

²² Stanisław Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy: studia nad przesileniem romantycznym kultury europejskiej* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Krytyki Politycznej, 2007), 87.

²³ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 86–7.

²⁴ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 92.

²⁵ Walicki, *Stanisław Brzozowski: drogi myśli*, 63.

²⁶ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 87.

²⁷ This applies even to science itself. “The scientific consciousness has finally showed itself for what it is, that is the exploitation of science through romantic consciousness, which by its nature seeks for itself a plane of existence beyond [real] life, independent of life, which is somehow mysteriously entitled to rule over life.” Science is a justification which relinquishes us from the responsibility of accounting for ourselves. But that justification is wearing thin. Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 84.

²⁸ Walicki, *Stanisław Brzozowski: drogi myśli*, 51.

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- ²⁹ Miłosz, *Człowiek wśród skorpinów*, 34–5.
- ³⁰ Stanisław Brzozowski, “Trąd wszechpolski,” *Promień*, August 1906, Quoted in Miłosz, *Człowiek wśród skorpinów*, 38.
- ³¹ Miłosz, *Człowiek wśród skorpinów*, 52.
- ³² Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 232.
- ³³ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 170–199.
- ³⁴ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 171, 186–7.
- ³⁵ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 175.
- ³⁶ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 183–6.
- ³⁷ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 188.
- ³⁸ Indeed, towards the end of his life Brzozowski himself accepted Catholicism.
- ³⁹ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 235.
- ⁴⁰ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 235.
- ⁴¹ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 242.
- ⁴² Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 240.
- ⁴³ Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 232.
- ⁴⁴ According to Brzozowski, he understood that “relinquishing responsibility” for life could only lead to “disaster.” Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy*, 242.
- ⁴⁵ Histories of the Piłsudczyk movement do not mention Brzozowski at all. Conversely, the only monograph dealing with the legacy and influence of Brzozowski’s thought in the interwar period contains only a brief, tendentious, and wholly unsatisfying treatment of his influence on the Piłsudski camp. Marian Stępień, *Spór o spuściznę po Stanisławie Brzozowskim w latach 1918-1939* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1976), 36–9.
- ⁴⁶ Tadeusz Katelbach, *Spowiedź pokolenia* (Gdańsk: Tow. Przyjaciół Wilna i Grodna, 2001), 26.
- ⁴⁷ Stary Płomienisty, “Narodowe i międzynarodowe stanowisko naszej organizacji,” *Promień*, January 1910.
- ⁴⁸ Ad. Lux, “Zagadnienia partiotyzmu polskiego,” *Promień*, April/May 1910.
- ⁴⁹ See Chapter III.
- ⁵⁰ Stary Płomienisty, “Narodowe i międzynarodowe stanowisko naszej organizacji,” 10.
- ⁵¹ Stary Płomienisty, “Narodowe i międzynarodowe stanowisko naszej organizacji,” 12.
- ⁵² Stary Płomienisty, “Narodowe i międzynarodowe stanowisko naszej organizacji,” 13.
- ⁵³ Ad. Lux, “Zagadnienia partiotyzmu polskiego,” 1.
- ⁵⁴ Ad. Lux, “Zagadnienia partiotyzmu polskiego,” 2.
- ⁵⁵ Ad. Lux, “Zagadnienia partiotyzmu polskiego,” 3.
- ⁵⁶ Ad. Lux, “Zagadnienia partiotyzmu polskiego,” 3.
- ⁵⁷ Still, if there is no transcendental essence or importance to being Polish or Russian, we may wonder whether Skwarczyński’s efforts would not be better spent

teaching the Poles how to speak Russians and trying to change the Russian Empire from within.

⁵⁸ Skwarczyński cites Mickiewicz, who, in *Wykłady literatury słowiańskiej*, defines the fatherland not as “a bounded piece of land beyond which the existence and national action of Poles should end” but an idea “which has as yet no power on this earth, and is still actualizing itself. Ad. Lux, “Zagadnienie partiotyzmu polskiego,” 4-5.

⁵⁹ Nałęcz, *Adam Skwarczyński*, 13.

⁶⁰ Daria Nałęcz, “Droga’ jako platforma kształtowania się ideologii piłsudczyków,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* no. 4 (1975): 592.

⁶¹ In a candid letter written to his friend Feliks Perl before leading a daring and dangerous attack on Russian bank train in the village of Bezdany, Piłsudski a “I ask you [if you write my obituary] not render me ‘a good officer, a whiner, or a sentimentalist,’ that is a good man stretching himself out on the cross of humanity, or whatever. I used to be like that to some extent, but that was during my lofty and grim youth. Now, it has passed, it has passed forever—the whining and self-crucifying has bothered me so much when I witnessed it among out intelligentsia—it is so weak and hopeless. I fight and I will die because I can no longer live in the outhouse that is our life, because it is offensive—you hear!—offensive to me as a man with a non-slavish dignity. Let others play at tending the flowers of socialism or Polishness in this outhouse ... atmosphere—I can’t! This is not [about] sentimentalism, whining, the little machine of social progress, or whatever else, it is [about] plain old human dignity. ... I hope you understand me. I am not driven by despair or sacrifice but by the desire to win and for preparing the foundations for victory. Józef Piłsudski, “List do Feliksa Perla,” in *Pisma zbiorowe*, ed. by Leon Wasilewski, vol. 2 (Warszawa: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1937), 299–300.

CHAPTER V

Civic Nationalism and its Contradictions: The Piłsudczyks 1918-1922

The outbreak of World War I found Polish society deeply divided. Most Poles in Russia and Austria generally supported their respective imperial governments, while German Poles hoped for a Russian victory.¹ The political elites of Polish society offered scores of solutions to the “Polish question.” These ranged from reconstructing an independent Poland under the Hapsburgs as a “third tier” of the Empire, to national unification under the rule of the Russian Emperor. The imperial governments encouraged such divisions, as each hoped to use the Polish cause over for its own ends.

While the conflict between the National Democrats and the Patriotic Left continued unabated, during the war it became confined primarily to tactical questions. The NDs remained firmly committed to the Russians and the Western powers. On November 25, 1914, the Endek-dominated Polish National Committee issued a proclamation stating that “the key task for the Polish nation” was the “destruction of German power and the unification of Poland under the aegis of the Russian monarch.”² Conversely, Piłsudski, supported by the PPS and other left-leaning groups, stood at the head of the Polish military Legions (*Legiony*) organized in Austria with the goal of engaging the Russian army and liberating Poland.

These debates about so-called “orientation” (*orientacja*) were extremely bitter since they involved, literally, matters of life and death. Understandably soldiers fighting in Piłsudski’s Legions against the Russians viewed the National Democratic leadership’s Russophilism as treason to the national cause. On the other hand, the NDs, who strove to gain Allied recognition for Polish aspirations, viewed Piłsudski’s involvement on the Austrian side as a politically counterproductive and deeply tragic waste of young lives. During the war years, this tactical debate dominated political discussion, and pushed other issues into the background. And it is true that recriminations about “orientation” continued to haunt Polish politics long after they had ceased to be relevant.³

National Independence and the Piłsudczyks

Nevertheless, with the sudden creation of an independent Polish state on November 11, 1918, the question of precisely *where* and *what* Poland should be, assumed an entirely new urgency. Indeed, as long as there was no Polish state to speak of, any questions regarding its future nature were entirely abstract. But the country’s sudden reappearance on the map of Europe not only brought these questions back into the political arena but gave them a qualitatively different importance. In fact, the specific political and military situation demanded *immediate* answers to at least some of them. The Polish state which appeared in 1918 was probably a surprise to most Poles. The implosion of Russia, the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, and the sudden defeat of Germany left the Poles *de facto* in charge of the vast majority of those lands where they

constituted a majority. But the unexpected speed with which the Germans withdrew was a surprise to almost everyone and was met largely with confusion. At the beginning of November 1918, at least six different governments competed for legitimacy in the Polish lands. Yet, within a matter of days all of them voluntarily gave up their prerogatives to one man—Józef Piłsudski.⁴ The claims of scholars who argue that the commander of the Legions, who had just been released from a German prison, was simply the only possible choice for the job are somewhat exaggerated, and may bear the stamp of *ex post facto* mythmaking by the Marshall's followers.⁵ Nevertheless for a brief moment Piłsudski, who assumed that time-honored Polish title of *Naczelnik* (Head of State), which had been used by insurrectionary leaders since Tadeusz Kościuszko, appeared to hold the keys to Poland's future in his hands.

The new leader's first action was to call for the creation of a Constituent Assembly (*Sejm Ustawodawczy*), which would be charged with preparing a new constitution and creating the legal basis for the establishment of a democratic republic. Elections were held in January 1919, and in February of that year the new body was already in session. Nevertheless, from November 1918 until March 1921, when the Treaty of Riga officially sealed the matter of Poland's eastern borders, Piłsudski was in full control of the young state's rapidly expanding military and was in a position to attempt to put into place the vision of the Polish imagined community subscribed to by him and his closest followers.

The outcome of Piłsudski's attempts to create the Poland of his dreams would be settled on the battlefield. In his quest to create a Polish-led federation, the *Naczelnik*

allied with the Ukrainian People's Republic and pro-Polish Belarusian leaders and, in what he explained as an attempt to bring freedom to the Ukrainians and Belarusians, entered into a hostilities with Bolshevik forces, which were squeezing the Ukrainians from the east. Piłsudski could be ruthless in his attempts to create a "federation." Polish troops under his control brutally destroyed the nascent West Ukrainian People's Republic in Eastern Galicia even as they sought an alliance with the Petlura's Ukrainian People's Republic, which constituted itself on former Russian lands. Meanwhile, the secret Polish Military Organization attempted to stage a coup in Lithuania in order to bring it under *de facto* Polish control.

The Polish public could become intoxicated by news of Piłsudski's victories. For example, when Polish troops entered Kiev, even the National Democrat Głębiński gave a speech in which he praised the Marshall and likened his achievements to those of the medieval King Bolesław Chrobry.⁶ Nevertheless, euphoria brought on by unexpected military victories aside, it is probably safe to say that most Poles remained apathetic, if not hostile, to Piłsudski's efforts.⁷ At any rate, these political and military struggles have been analyzed extensively and it is not my intent to revisit them here. However, virtually no attention has been paid to the manner in which the Piłsudczyks justified their eastward "adventures," and how the latter fit into their vision of the imagined community of the Polish nation.

In the remainder of this chapter I will attempt to analyze the ideology articulated by, or with the complicity of, the inner circle surrounding Piłsudski. But before

proceeding, it is important to define exactly who these people were. While I have referred to the Piłsudczyks earlier in this work, it is only in independent Poland that this term became commonly used.⁸ At this point it is necessary to define it more closely. In the broadest definition, a Piłsudczyk can be seen as any follower of the Marshal, ranging from radical democrats to, in the post-1926 period, conservative authoritarians. In the period between independence and the assassination of Narutowicz, the term had a more specific political meaning, since virtually all the collaborators and followers of Piłsudski were generally on the left and espoused a more or less radical social program. Many of them had roots in the PPS (or its Galician counterpart, the PPSD). Some of Piłsudski's closest collaborators had fought with him in the Legions or, to a lesser extent, as members of the POW. These men (and they were almost all men) thought of themselves as the spiritual and political elite of the nation. They were by and large young, left-leaning or "radical" (though not necessarily socialist), and often very well educated members of the intelligentsia, who had volunteered for the seemingly Sisyphean task of fighting for Polish independence during World War I.

Their background made them profoundly different from any other military formation in Poland or, for that matter, in the world.⁹ They had once been aptly described as "the most intelligent army in the world" and they certainly thought of themselves as such.¹⁰ Men closest to the Marshall, like Walery Sławek, Edward Rydz-Śmigły, Kazimierz Sosnkowski, Janusz Jędrzejewicz, Bolesław Wieniawa-Długoszewski, Kazimierz Świtalski, Aleksander Prystor, or Adam Skwarczyński, were generally

Legionnaires, though some like Sławek, Prystor, and Skwarczyński knew Piłsudski from his PPS days. Tadeusz Hołówko and Wojciech Stpiczyński got their start in the POW.

The Piłsudczyks were never organized into a concrete political party. However, in the formative years of the Second Republic, Piłsudski could count on the support of two mass based parties. The first of these was the PPS. Even though he had formally left the party in 1914, the socialists “fully identified their political goals with those postulated by Piłsudski” and, until 1926, saw him as the “leader of the democratic camp.”¹¹ In the early days of the Second Republic, his enemies, the National Democrats, also invariably perceived Piłsudski as a “man of the left and a socialist.”¹² Therefore, while there were some frictions within the PPS over the extent to which Piłsudski would be able to influence its position on any particular issue, in the early 1920s the PPS could be counted as being part of the “Piłsudski camp” (*Obóz Piłsudskiego*).¹³

The second party which could be described as Piłsudczyk was the Polish Peasant Party “Liberation” (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe-Wyzwolenie*.) The “Liberation,” as it was commonly known, was a strange party, composed largely of poor and middling peasants with little or no political experience and led by sophisticated, urbane, Warsaw radicals. The party’s leadership, and particularly its longtime chairman Stanisław Thugutt, who had fought in the Legions, could generally be considered ardent Piłsudczyks. “Liberation,” which unlike the PPS had virtually no political tradition or concrete ideology of its own, was generally identified even more closely with the Marshal.¹⁴

Finally, Piłsudski was also supported by many politically unaffiliated members of the intelligentsia of broadly leftist or “radical” views, who had not been in the Legions, the POW, or the pre-war PPS. This category included public figures like Gabriel Narutowicz or Stanisław Bukowiecki, who were not formally affiliated with Liberation or PPS and not bound to Piłsudski through long term personal historical ties, but were considered, by both friend and foe, to be his partisans.¹⁵

What held these diverse groups and individuals together? Obviously, as Andrzej Garlicki points out, the key factor in any definition must be the Piłsudczyks’ personal loyalty to the Marshall and their belief in his almost infallible military and political genius.¹⁶ But that is not all. As I will show, key Piłsudczyks shared a large number of common views on political, social, and nationality issues, as well as a common vision of the national community, which differentiated them from their political enemies. Piłsudski was seen as the embodiment of this vision, and his charisma must be understood partly in this context.

Many features of the Piłsudczyks’ imagined community have been forgotten by historians. This amnesia includes not only those on the right, who would like to remember Piłsudski as one of their own, but even contemporary leftists who wax nostalgic about Piłsudski’s anachronistic but admirable multiculturalism without delving deeper into his followers’ political thought. I will now attempt to reconstruct and critically analyze the forgotten heritage of the Piłsudczyks’ imagined community. Or, to use contemporary academic jargon, I will attempt to trace the ‘discourse of the nation’

formulated by the core group of Piłsudski's followers between 1918-1922. Defining the latter, at least for our purposes, is not as difficult as it may seem. There is widespread agreement among scholars that the key theoretical organ of the "Piłsudski camp" was the weekly journal *Rząd i Wojsko* (Government and Army). At the beginning of 1922, *Rząd i Wojsko* became a monthly and changed its name to *Droga* (The Way).¹⁷ Both journals were edited by Adam Skwarczyński, whose early thought was already discussed in the previous chapter. Skwarczyński also attempted to start a daily newspaper, which appeared in 1919 under the name *Gazeta Polska*. However, despite a period of growth in readership, the paper was forced to close due to financial difficulties in 1920.¹⁸ Both *Rząd i Wojsko* and *Droga* were elite publications, without mass readership. Still, the fact that they represented the political thought of the group which came to rule Poland following 1926 is testified to by the fact they *Droga* was recommend reading for all veterans of Piłsudski's Legions, and was subscribed to by the local offices of the Legionnaires' Union (*Związek Legionistów Polskich*).¹⁹

The second "semi-official" organ of the Piłsudczyks was the weekly journal *Głos Prawdy*, edited by Wojciech Stpiczyński, who was considered a "radical" and somewhat of a trouble maker. Thus, it should be no surprise that *Głos Prawdy* was generally more polemical and less philosophical than either *Rząd i Wojsko* or *Droga*. Nonetheless, the two publications were seen as being complimentary, with *Droga* taking the intellectual high road, discussing ideas and seldom involving itself in practical political questions, and *Głos Prawdy* striking a more popular tone.²⁰ Like *Droga*, *Głos Prawdy* constituted "recommended reading" for Legionnaires' organizations.

The analysis of these two publications can be supplemented by referring to a number of daily papers which were close to the Piłsudski movement, even if they didn't have the same "official" status as *Droga* and *Głos Prawdy*. For example, the dailies *Kurjer Poranny* and *Kurjer Polski* were also seen as "Piłsudczyk" by both friend and foe. The former, edited by the famous journalist Kazimierz Ehrenberg, was close to Stanisław Thugutt, Liberation, and the radical Warsaw intelligentsia. It was considered to be the most Piłsudczyk of the daily papers and was the second most popular Warsaw daily after the right-wing *Kurjer Warszawski*.²¹ *Kurjer Polski* was a more conservative daily. According to the Ministry of Interior its readership was composed of "the Jewish plutocracy, liberal intelligentsia and a small group of [liberal] conservatives."²² Both *Kurjer Polski* and *Kurjer Poranny* published articles by prominent Piłsudczyks. The same was true of the PPS daily, *Robotnik*, which published many articles by prominent Piłsudczyks (many of whom were of course also members of the PPS) and was almost universally supportive of Piłsudski.

While there is widespread agreement that Skwarczyński was the most important theoretical thinker or ideologue of the Piłsudski camp, and Stpiczyński its popular tribune, finding other "representative" Piłsudczyks can be more controversial. There is no doubt that Tadeusz Hołówko, Janusz Jędrzejewicz, and Leon Wasilewski, all prolific writers and all personally close to Piłsudski, should be counted among this group. All three published in *Droga* and *Głos Prawdy*, and often in the dailies as well. Hołówko and Wasilewski, who remained card carrying PPS members until the late 1920s also wrote for *Robotnik*. Other prominent writers, who published in one or more of these papers and

could be seen as representing Piłsudczyk positions are Julian Huzarski, Marian Ujazdowski, Kazimierz Świtalski, Tadeusz Święcicki, Marcei Handelsman, Waclaw Fabirkiewicz, Stanisław Bukowiecki, and others. And while it may be true that the Piłsudczyks never formulated a monolithic ideology and many of these writers disagreed on particular questions, as we will see they were in fundamental agreement as to the manner in which they conceptualized the imagined community of Poland. This agreement may be surprising but, in itself, should support the claim of a relatively cohesive worldview held by the key adherents of Marshal Piłsudski.

Obviously, the conception of the imagined community of the Polish nation articulated by the key followers of Piłsudski on the pages of publications like *Droga* or *Głos Prawdy* did not necessarily represent the rank and file of the Piłsudski's adherents. Nevertheless, if we conceptualize the conflict between the Piłsudczyks and the NDs as the struggle for the Polish "soul," which is how both the parties in question perceived it, or over the discursive field of the Polish nation, as we would say today, then the discourse presented in Piłsudczyk publications is essential for understanding the stakes involved in the conflict that shaped modern Polish history.

Creativity, Labor, and the Nation

The critical importance of Stanisław Brzozowski's thought is underscored by an article dedicated to Brzozowski in the second issue of *Droga*, which provides a good vantage point from which we can begin to understand the importance of Brzozowski for

the Piłsudczyks. According to the article's author, Jan Rundbaken, the two central questions animating Brzozowski's thought were "to what extent can a being be authentic and true to itself [and] to what extent is the self-conscious creative individual responsible for the drama of history?"²³ It was this fundamental question of authenticity which, according to Rundbaken, led Brzozowski to embrace the importance of the nation. More specifically, all humans beings were "historically constituted" by their national culture, which was fundamentally impossible to transcend. This is why, according to Rundbaken, Brzozowski was "the enemy of everything international, trans-historical, and abstract." He viewed all such attempts at the transcendence of history, culture, and nation as escapist, inauthentic, and disassociated from the reality of life.²⁴ Authentic life was embedded in concrete cultures and histories. Living in society, the individual consumed the "collective historical labor of others." To be authentic was to accept this fundamental fact and to participate in this process of social construction. And to participate in this process in a meaningful manner, one could not turn one's back on the nation. To underscore this point, Rundbaken cited Brzozowski's advice to the Russian intellectual: "Know your nature and once you have come to know it, have the courage to live with this terrible body, to labor through it, and to walk forward!"²⁵

According to Rundbaken, Brzozowski demanded that the individual labor "creatively" to change one's nation and, *through it*, the world. Thus, when Brzozowski called on the individual to "serve" his or her society, he understood the "service" as "creative" or transformative. This, according to Rundbaken's understanding of Brzozowski was the highest human calling. As we will see, this understanding of

Brzozowski undergirded the Piłsudczyks' political philosophy. The terms "service," "creativity," and "labor," as understood by Brzozowski, are crucial to understanding the political ideology articulated by Piłsudczyks in early independent Poland.

Perhaps the most explicit and concise attempt to define and explain what it meant to be a Piłsudczyk was made by Adam Skwarczyński on the pages of *Rząd i Wojsko* in 1919, in an article entitled, quite bluntly, "*The Piłsudczyks*."²⁶ According to Skwarczyński, the followers of Piłsudski could best be defined by an ethic of "service." A Piłsudczyk, Skwarczyński wrote, is "someone who, with his life, attempts to address a specific cluster of national, social, and individual questions."²⁷ It is important to note the surprisingly open ended character of this definition; a Piłsudczyk is not defined by devotion to Poland or Piłsudski. Rather, the key element in the definition is the desire for *engagement in public life as such*, without this engagement necessarily having a clear, concrete, or specific, object or goal.

The world, according to Skwarczyński, should be seen "the arena for one's labor and initiative," and a true Piłsudczyk was someone who grasped this fundamental fact about life, and accepted the responsibility it implied.²⁸ As such, he had to consciously strive to be in a position where could be the "co-creator of his own life world."²⁹ It is for this reason that the Piłsudczyk must both "want and need" to exercise political power (*władza*).³⁰ Power is what allows him to actively shape the world and to live a full and creative life. Indeed, "creativity" and "creation," in the sense in which Brzozowski used these words, will continue to play a key role in the rhetoric of Skwarczyński and other Piłsudczyks. This is the very opposite of the National Democratic doctrine, in which the

individual is portrayed as a cog in a larger bio-sociological machine, or organism, and where the emphasis is on discipline rather than creativity. Here, it is the individual who assumes the position of primary importance and it is the individual, not the collective, who constitutes the ultimate reference point of all binding norms and values.

Why, then, the nation and Piłsudski? The role of Piłsudski in Skwarczyński's thought is perhaps easier to explain. While Skwarczyński refuses to discuss his personal relationship with the Marshal, which is "too sensitive a thing to be discussed in public," he offers a succinct and convincing explanation of the importance of Piłsudski, who emerges as a model, an educator, and a living embodiment of the ideals of his followers.³¹ In other words, he is someone who embodies and exemplifies the "psychological makeup" and attitude towards life that characterizes, to a greater or lesser extent, all those who can legitimately call themselves Piłsudczyks. In fact, while Skwarczyński doesn't make this analogy, on the basis of his presentation it is possible to see in Piłsudski what Brzozowski saw in Maurycy Mochnacki—the archetypal "modern man" and "conscious creator and participant of the nation."

The question of Polish patriotism, however, is not answered satisfactorily, although insofar as it is broached, it too is dealt with in a manner which echoes Brzozowski. The love of the fatherland, Skwarczyński writes, does not need to be justified because it is *felt as real*. The Piłsudczyk sees "Poland with the eyes of his soul, he knows her, he breathes her air, he feels her within himself as a prophecy which must be fulfilled."³² To understand Skwarczyński's patriotism, however, we must go further. It is interesting that even the few historians who have paid attention to Skwarczyński's

writings have, by and large, missed his central philosophical justification of Polish patriotism. To understand the latter, we must delve into his view of history. For Skwarczyński, the history of all nations possessed a certain “content” (*treść*).³³ Like for Brzozowski, this content was not something metaphysical, but a cultural construction, resulting from the particularities of each nation’s unique history. It was not an ‘essence’ and it did not predetermine the future, which was always ultimately in the realm of human agency. Still, the *idea* of the Polish nation possessed a particular potentiality which, Skwarczyński argued, could under the right circumstances provide a singular contribution to human history. The history of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth and the so-called “nobles’ democracy,” Skwarczyński wrote, was “animated by questions of universal importance: questions of freedom, responsibility, service to the common political good, and most importantly, the excellent question of the Republic, this fantastic social construction (*konstrukcja życiowa*) which made possible the creative, self-sustaining life of equals within the framework of mutual obligations.”³⁴

It is important to note that Skwarczyński did not idealize this past. He readily acknowledged its many failures and wrote that in order to move forward Poland must jettison the reactionary landowners of the *Kresy* (Borderlands) region, who had for centuries represented the bastion of Polish culture in the east, and “look beyond the tradition of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth.”³⁵ Tradition was to be used selectively and, to use Skwarczyński’s own word again, “creatively.” The goal was not to remain faithful to some glorious past but to use what was good in the past in order to create a great future. Hence, when the tradition of the Commonwealth, with its legacy of serfdom

and Polish cultural domination over Lithuanians and eastern Slavs, failed to offer a convincing answer to the country's future, Skwarczyński had no problem looking to other sources for inspiration. In the case of Poland's relationship with Lithuania, still very amorphous in 1919, he hoped to find a creative synthesis between the "golden age" of the Commonwealth and the radical revolutionary tradition of the romantics, with its emphasis on social emancipation.³⁶ Nor did he see Poland's past as necessarily predetermining the course of the future. "Our past," Skwarczyński wrote, "offers beautiful hopes for the future... but only living humans will make it possible to develop the treasures of the national spirit [and] only the will points out the road towards the future, which must necessarily be a road of labor and effort."³⁷

The great Polish-Jewish historian Marcei Handelsman, whose articles frequently appeared in *Droga* and other Piłsudczyk publications, saw it in a similar manner. According to Handelsman, the logic of Polish history contained two opposite poles. On the one side was "pride, private interest, serfdom, and the bloody sea of the Ukrainian Wars ... on the other, the power resulting from the fusion of Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, German, and Jewish races into a single Polish citizenship, with the result of these diverse elements dedicating themselves to the Republic and, through it, to the good of humanity, with limitless sacrifice and idealism."³⁸ Both these potentialities were contained in Polish history and struggled for supremacy in the present. Which of them would triumph, Handelsman wrote, depended on "clear and conscious reflection."³⁹

For Skwarczyński, too, the content of Polish history offered a potentiality which could be actualized through human agency. And herein lies the key to understanding

Skwarczyński's thought—just as it was the individual's calling to make his mark on his culture and nation so, through the nation, he could make his mark on human history:

The question now is the following: will the Polish nation entering into the union of the peoples of the world as an independent state, enrich it with the dowry of its historical development, will it make a contribution to [universal] human culture, will it propel the latter through its efforts, or will it, to the contrary, come to resemble some Serbia, Montenegro, or Albania, nations which use the cultural heritage of the world without offering it anything, or hardly anything, in return?⁴⁰

Admittedly, Skwarczyński's frequent references to the Jagiellonian period, the "golden age" of Polish history, may sometimes make him appear as nothing more than a nostalgic apologist for the Commonwealth, and this could well be how he was read by at least some of his less discerning readers. But to leave it at that, would be a gross oversimplification. In the first place, we can easily discern, just as we did in his earlier writings, references to universal human culture and norms or values that are beyond the nation, and from the standpoint of which the nation could (and should) be judged. There is no room in his formulation for the nationalist slogan "my country right or wrong" or for the National Democrats' doctrine of "national egoism." The old Republic was great not because it was Polish but because it was "a fantastic social construction." And if Poland was to achieve greatness again, it could only be for the same reasons.

A careful reader should also notice that Skwarczyński's defense of Polish patriotism ultimately rests, as it did in his earlier writings, on the basis of a highly individualist psychology or philosophy. To put it in simplest terms, Skwarczyński believed that the Piłsudczyks had the potential to create positive changes within their nation and, equally important, through the latter to make their mark on shaping the development of

world history. Marcei Handelsman summarized it as follows: “Service for humanity through service for the nation.”⁴¹ This pursuit of both individual and collective (national) *kleos* within the framework of a universal human culture was the deepest justification of patriotism offered by Skwarczyński. Thus, Skwarczyński hoped, the new Polish state would, like the old Republic, become a “great” and positive force in history and an exemplar of universal values. *That* was the Poland for which the Piłsudczyks longed and for which they were ready to die. And they believed that it was up to them to bring that Poland into being.

Of course, *that* Poland was still a matter of the future and of human agency or “creation.” Indeed it has been frequently observed that the Piłsudczyks’ focused on “Poland,” or the Polish the state, and largely ignored the “nation” in their rhetoric and political thought.⁴² “The state became the centre of Piłsudczyk ideology,” writes Daria Nałęcz in her analysis of *Droga*, “and was elevated to the rank of a philosophical category.”⁴³ The claims of historians like Nałęcz further reinforce the Piłsudczyks’ classification as “civic” nationalists, which can be neatly contrasted with the National Democrats’ “ethnic” nationalism. However, while there is undoubtedly some truth to this assertion, Nałęcz’s statement needs to be qualified in two separate ways.

First, like the rest of Piłsudczyk ideology, the role of the state was ultimately justified by its importance in the life of the individual and was, again, heavily influenced by the writings of Brzozowski. Janusz Jędrzejewicz, one of Piłsudski’s most trusted political operatives, explained the role of the state in language obviously borrowed from Brzozowski. According to Jędrzejewicz, most statist political forces in European history

could be described as having been conservative.⁴⁴ In Poland, these included “the landowner, the rich peasant, and the priest,” who had no fundamental concerns about the actual “content” of the state as long as it fulfilled its basic functions and allowed citizens to live their private lives in peace. As a result, Polish conservatives had for the most part been loyal citizens of the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian states.⁴⁵

The Piłsudczyks, Jędrzejewicz argued, viewed the state in an entirely different light. For them, the state was a “vehicle for a creative life” or an instrument which would allow them to “transform, change, or create” life in their society and nation.⁴⁶ In other words, the state was *not* “the centre-point of Piłsudczyk ideology.” It was not a fetish or an end in itself—it was a tool which could be utilized by a self-selected elite (the Piłsudczyks of course!) to change the world. Obviously, only certain kinds of states met these stringent criteria. And the Piłsudczyks’ goal was to create a state that made a creative life possible—not a state where, to quote Brzozowski again, the Russian hangman would be replaced by a Polish one.⁴⁷ Handelsman made the same point in an even more explicit manner: Poland will achieve greatness only if “it will be strong not through external strength but through conviction of the rectitude of her cause and the latter’s congruence with universal ideals.”⁴⁸ The normative content of the state, and its ability to offer the individual genuine liberty to live a creative life, was what it legitimacy.

Secondly, the *national* “content” of the state was important too. This may seem obvious, but unfortunately the point is missed by many scholars writing on “civic” nationalism today.⁴⁹ The Piłsudczyks *never* understood the state in abstraction from the

nation, and those who would like to see their patriotism as entirely “civic” miss an important point. The Polish state demanded loyalty *because it was Polish* and not simply because it was a state. This point was made most forcefully by Stanisław Bukowiecki, one of the leaders of the National Civic Union (*Unia Narodowo- Państwowa* or UNP), a political party generally seen as the most serious Piłsudczyk attempt at entering electoral politics prior to 1926. According to Bukowiecki, the existence of a “national interest” separate and opposed to “state interest” (*racja stanu* or *raison d’état*), made perfect sense when the Poles had no state of their own. It was only with the emergence of a *Polish* state that such a distinction became a “misunderstanding.” What was good for the Polish state, Bukowiecki wrote, could not be bad for the Polish nation! Conversely, by undermining the state, the nation could only hurt itself.⁵⁰ But it was the nation which ultimately justified the state, and not the other way around.

The same point was made more forcefully in Stpiczyński’s *Głos Prawdy*. By attempting to forcibly polonize the national minorities in the east, the author (most likely Stpiczyński himself) wrote, the National Democrats were creating enemies for the Polish state and, thus, for the Polish nation. “Real national thought,” he continued, “is the same as statist thought (*myśl państwowa*)—its goal should be to create a strong state to defend the nation and give the Polish idea a character that would attract, rather than repel, our weaker neighbors.”⁵¹ Therefore, as the Piłsudczyks saw it, there was no opposition between the interests of the nation and the state, if the state was used for its proper ends—serving the *true* long-term interests of the nation.

But what were these interests? And what was to be the end of all the “creation” advocated by Skwarczyński and his colleagues? It is fine to say, as countless scholars have said of Piłsudski, that his philosophy was one of action.⁵² But this merely raises another question: action to *what ends*? Creating “new” values is always problematic—like Nietzsche, Brzozowski himself had been vague on this subject partly because anything “new” cannot, by definition be predetermined. But in 1919, the Piłsudczyks were in an entirely different position. They were effectively creating a new nation state, and trying to articulate what that state and the nation stood for. They had no choice but to take a stand on practical issues and, to some extent, to articulate a practical program of action.⁵³ Their conception of the Polish community emerges most clearly not in purely theoretical musings, but in their advocacy and justification of specific policies.

When discussing the latter, it is possible to speak of two separate periods. In the first one, between 1918 and 1920, the opportunities for “creation” (in Brzozowski’s and Skwarczyński’s sense of this term) in the national and political spheres seemed almost limitless. From the moment when Piłsudski first led Polish troops into Ukraine and Belarus, until the Treaty of Riga settled the question of Poland’s eastern borders, statesmen and thinkers were presented with a very broad canvas on which to paint their visions or “imaginings” of the nation. The creation of Belarusian and Ukrainian states under Polish tutelage seemed like a definite possibility, and as a result the question of Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities *in* Poland receded into the background. In the period following the Treaty of Riga, the situation was quite different. Mostly due to the outcome of the war, but also as a result of the National Democrats’ control of the peace

delegation, the Poland created in 1921 was very different from the one hoped for by the Piłsudczyks. Most importantly, it contained significant minority populations which had to be dealt with within the framework of the Polish state.⁵⁴

The Nationalities Question

Writing on February 9, 1919, Skwarczyński criticized the narrowly partisan programs put forth by the PPS and the Liberation and bemoaned the lack of a “genuine Polish program.”⁵⁵ He also announced that *Rząd i Wojsko* will do what it can in order to remedy this situation, and promised that in forthcoming issues it will tackle “crucial questions” facing the Polish state. These were listed in the following order: “the constitutional question, the question of Lithuania, East Prussia, and Belarus, the Ukrainian question, the land reform question, and the Jewish question.”⁵⁶

The key to understanding the manner in which these “questions” were answered was Skwarczyński’s and his collaborators’ overriding concern with “greatness” or “great power status.” The Polish terms used, “*wielkość*,” “*mocarstwowość*,” “*mocarstwo*,” would become popular slogans in the political rhetoric of the 1930s, when they would become synonymous with Poland’s imperialist dreams. In the early 1920s, however, the term *mocarstwowość* referred to the idea of creating in Warsaw an alternative power center to both Moscow and Berlin.⁵⁷ Because of Poland’s demographic weakness, the argument went, the country could become a full-fledged independent player in European politics only with the support of its immediate neighbors, specifically Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus, and in some formulations also the other Baltic states and Romania. Inevitably,

Poland would play the hegemonic role in this arrangement. This is not the place to present the strategic considerations or political strategies involved in this project, which have been amply discussed elsewhere.⁵⁸ What is important for our purposes, however, is to see what these schemes revealed about the Piłsudczyks' understanding of their imagined community.

It is often asserted that Piłsudski himself, and by implication his followers, worked on the basis of an early modern multi-ethnic conception of the Polish nation, which lacked an ethnic component. But as we will see, this is simply not true. At least in the arguments presented to the public, the rationale for *mocarstwowość* and for expanding Poland's sphere of influence to the East was quite different. On the basis of what we have seen of the Piłsudczyks' thought thus far, it should not be difficult to see why "greatness" was an overriding priority—it was the natural fulfillment of the full, creative, and active life demanded by Brzozowski and Skwarczyński. More problematic, however, was the question of whether the Poles' desire for greatness would be compatible with similar desires on the part of Ukrainians, Lithuanians, or Belarusians or with Skwarczyński's injunction that Poland make a positive contribution to "universal culture" without trampling upon the rights of others. In order to understand the Piłsudczyks' position on this issue, it is necessary to go beyond the clichés about Piłsudski's own supposed anachronistic longing for old Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Rather, the key to understanding the position articulated by Skwarczyński and others in *Rząd i Wojsko*, is their faith in the Poles' ability to draw *consciously and selectively* from the past in order to construct an entirely *new* imagined community. This

new Poland would be a great power or *mocarstwo* because, despite not having enough demographic resources of her own, she would be able to win non-Poles, and particularly Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Jews, to her cause. Admittedly, one could argue that Skwarczyński and the Piłsudczyks used such realpolitik arguments in order to “sell” their desires for the resurrection of the Commonwealth to a skeptical Polish public. Indeed, it appears that these “nostalgic” desires and “rational” great power calculations were in fact tangled together and constituted a single worldview which cannot be neatly mapped out along a line of logical progression. Nevertheless, it is significant that in public discourse, the historical or “nostalgic” line of argumentation was entirely absent.

It is most interesting that in *Rzqd i Wojsko* and other Piłsudczyk publications, the Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians (though not the Jews, an important exception which will be discussed later) were almost always designated with the term *narody* or “nations” rather than *narodowości* or “nationalities.” In other words, they were treated as full-fledged political partners and equals of the Poles, rather than as ethnic groups which could be included in the “civic” Polish nation. It was precisely by treating these peoples as fully fledged subjects that the Piłsudczyks hoped to make possible the powerful Poland they dreamed of. Skwarczyński explained the pragmatic argument for national toleration as follows:

We have a [traditional] way of dealing with foreign nations.... It is a way full of beauty and happiness and full of positive results far more tangible than any ever provided by narrow and greedy egoism. We have forgotten this way. We have forgotten about the moral power and the political power flowing from it⁵⁹

Clearly, Skwarczyński's argument was not only moral but pragmatic. By treating other nations justly, the Polish nation would be augmenting its own power. Handelsman was even more explicit in linking the just treatment of Ukrainians and Belarusians with Poland's interests. "Poland has to be a great power in order to survive between Russia and Germany," he wrote, "but it will only become a great power by following a moral path in foreign policy and winning the allegiance of these nations without resort to force."⁶⁰

Ethical and pragmatic arguments, or moral and political power, not only went hand in hand, but reinforced one another. From this perspective, the problem with the NDs' "national egoism" was not just that it was immoral but, perhaps even more importantly, that it disregarded the real and long-term interests of the Polish nation in favor of immediate but ultimately illusory gains. But it was still the *interests of the Polish nation*, rather than the hopes of creating some kind of multi-cultural imagined community that were paramount in Piłsudczyks' calculations.

Another aspect of the mutually reinforcing relationship between moral and political power pertained to questions of social justice. A Poland that would be an attractive ally, model, or protector to the Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Belarusians had to be radical, egalitarian, and just. And it had to give up on Polish landowners, in exchange for winning over the trust of the Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian peasants. Failing to set up a just social order in Poland, according to an anonymous article in *Rzqd i Wojsko*, would "lock us in the narrow confines of our borders."⁶¹ Hence, again, it appears that considerations of justice went hand in hand with those of the national interest.

But what did these lofty ideals mean in practice? Were they simply a smoke screen for conventional imperialism? As is well known, the National Democrats put forth a program of “annexation” or “incorporation,” which called for the creation of an ethnically Polish state and the inclusion of only those non-Polish areas which could, in the opinion of the NDs, be easily assimilated. The Piłsudczyks, on the other hand, conceptualized a “federalist” program. But while Piłsudski’s federalism is often asserted, it is seldom analyzed. Let us briefly examine how such program was imagined or articulated.

In 1919, the Piłsudczyks saw the Lithuanian and Belarusian questions not as matters of internal policy but of foreign affairs. In other words, the two peoples were discussed not as “national minorities” within Poland, but as neighbors. The “Lithuanian-Belarusian question” was the first one to present itself chronologically and was probably most important to Piłsudski himself. The old Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which had been an integral part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was still very much alive in the memory of some of its inhabitants. However, the territories of the Grand Duchy were inhabited by a mix of Poles, Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Jews. Additionally, somewhat like the Hapsburg Empire, which had just ended its existence, ‘historic’ Lithuania could be seen as a holdover from a pre-national feudal age and it was highly doubtful whether it could be “resurrected” in the 20th century. Indeed, most Polish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian activists hoped to divide it into separate national states—though obviously there was no agreement as to *how* to divide it.

Piłsudski and his followers, however, chose to treat the old Grand Duchy as a single unit. On April 18, 1919 Polish troops under Piłsudski entered Wilno, which had

briefly been held by the newly constituted Lithuanian state but then quickly lost to the Bolsheviks. On April 22, 1919, Piłsudski issued a proclamation which he personally drafted to “The Inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.”⁶² After describing the oppression of Russian and German occupations, the Marshall wrote the following:

The Polish troops, which I brought with me to end the rule of violence and oppression, and bring down governments that lacked the consent of the people—these troops bring you all liberty and freedom. I want to give you the opportunity to solve your internal, national, and religious issues as you see fit, without violence or interference from Poland.⁶³

The manifesto further promised free elections, establishment of the rule of law, and respect for all nationalities. For good measure, it was printed in four languages: Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Yiddish. Of course, the actual actions of Polish soldiers were often at odds with Piłsudski’s vision. There were a number of well documented pogroms initiated by Polish soldiers in historic Lithuania, and the Polish administration’s treatment of Lithuanians and Belarusians also left much to be desired.⁶⁴ Even if the press reports of those events in the West were generally exaggerated, such incidents clearly illustrated what the Piłsudczyks were up against.⁶⁵ But they do not change the fact that Piłsudski seemed to be serious in his intentions. In fact, the political costs of the proclamation back in Warsaw were very serious. As *Rząd i Wojsko* reported, Warsaw’s right-wing press greeted it with a “hiss of hatred.”⁶⁶ Meanwhile, the National Democrats did their best to undermine Piłsudski’s attempts, and to annex the Polish parts of the historical Grand Duchy to Poland.⁶⁷

As is well known, Piłsudski’s long term plan was to create an independent multiethnic Lithuanian state which would be federated, or closely allied with Poland.

These plans were anathema to the National Democrats and a good part of the Polish population, who believed that those parts of Lithuania with a Polish majority should be simply incorporated into the Polish state. How did the Piłsudczyks respond to the charges that they were “giving up” Wilno and “betraying” its Polish population? There is little doubt that Piłsudski considered himself a Lithuanian, in the historical or political sense, as well as a Pole. But while a number of prominent “Polish-speaking Lithuanians” attempted to promote precisely such a Polish-Lithuanian identity, this was not at all the line of argumentation pursued by the Piłsudczyks in justifying their federal plans.

Rather, Skwarczyński presented two arguments for including Polish speaking areas into an independent Lithuania. The first argument was based on Polish *raison d'état* and the aforementioned doctrine of *mocarstwowość*. On its own, Poland could never be an independent factor in European politics and following the path proposed by the NDs would inevitably lead her to a dependence on foreign powers.⁶⁸ Therefore, in order to be the master of her own destinies, protect herself from Germany and Russia, and avoid dependence on France, Poland was *forced* to create a powerful and friendly Lithuania. To fail in this would be tantamount to creating a weak state unable to stand on its own two feet, let alone play a constructive role in the world.⁶⁹

The second argument was historical, but consistently with Skwarczyński's thought, history was not used to legitimate the present course of action but to indicate certain potentialities. Significantly, nowhere in *Rząd i Wojsko* was the argument advanced that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania ought to be resurrected and allied with Poland because it had once been part of the Commonwealth. To be sure, the traditions of the

Commonwealth, and the presence of many Poles in historic Lithuania, made such an alliance possible. But its legitimacy and desirability, or lack thereof, would ultimately be decided by modern Poles and modern Lithuanians.⁷⁰ The tradition of the Commonwealth could be deployed as the inspiration or foundation for future action and, Skwarczyński acknowledged, it had to contend and compete with other, less inspiring traditions. “The old spirit of Poland, which had united her with her neighbors through goodwill has today been called to Lithuania,” he wrote, “but it is fighting a dark spirit created during the Partitions, which came to us as Russian and Prussian disease.”⁷¹ If we were to use Benedict Anderson’s somewhat awkward but analytically more precise vocabulary, then what Skwarczyński meant by “spirits” were simply “imaginings” of the political community.

Obviously, the Polish-Soviet war and the Treaty of Riga dealt a severe blow to the Piłsudczyks’ plans. While their hopes of Ukrainian statehood were nullified by the results of the war—the Soviet negotiators at Riga refused to budge an inch beyond the armistice frontlines, the hopes for a Belarusian state were effectively destroyed by the Poles themselves. In fact, the Soviets were willing to offer Poland a good part of Belarus, including Minsk, but the offer was rejected by the National Democrat negotiator, Stanisław Grabski, *precisely* to frustrate Piłsudski’s plans.⁷²

Relations with Lithuania, already strained, deteriorated even further when in October 1920 Polish troops under General Żeligowski “mutinied,” in fact taking direct orders from Piłsudski, and occupied Wilno and its surrounding area, which the Soviets had left to the Lithuanians after taking it from the Poles. These territories, numbering some 13,000 km² with a population of about 500,000, were declared to be an independent

state called 'Central Lithuania.' The independence of Central Lithuania, opposed by the vast majority of its inhabitants who simply wanted to be united with Poland, was Piłsudski's last gambit at persuading the Lithuanians to join Poland in a federation. The plan was to promise to return Wilno to Lithuania in exchange for reorganizing the latter on federal principles and placing it under *de facto* Polish tutelage. Understandably the Lithuanians refused, which for all practical purposes killed all future hopes of resurrecting the Grand Duchy.

Thus, the Treaty of Riga, Lithuania's position, as well as the stance of Polish society, both in Poland and in Central Lithuania itself, effectively killed any idea of a resurrection of the old Grand Duchy. In fact, the last factor was probably decisive. The *krajowcy*, as Polish-speaking Lithuanians called themselves, constituted a tiny (though often influential) minority, and even ardent Piłsudczyks charged with preparing the ground for Central Lithuanian's "independence" were skeptical about its viability.⁷³

But while the Second Republic contained only a tiny Lithuanian minority, it also had some 1.5 million Belarusians within its borders. The National Democrats believed that they could be assimilated. The Piłsudczyks disagreed, but in comparison with the Ukrainians and Jews, they generally paid little attention to the Belarusians after 1921.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, insofar as they addressed this issue, they expressed the hope that the Belarusians would remain loyal citizens of Poland. But they had no plans to include them in the Polish nation, even in the "civic" or "political" sense: they readily admitted that the eastern borderlands were "non-Polish" and that the Belarusians were a nation.⁷⁵ Rather, the hope was to support the latter's cultural development and, in the long term, to unite

them with their compatriots ruled by Russia in their own independent state.⁷⁶ Polish Belarus was conceptualized as a “Piedmont,” around which a future Belarusian state will rise.⁷⁷ As we will see, these plans were even more pronounced with regards to the Ukraine. The Piłsudczyks’ early conceptions regarding Polish involvement in Ukraine were very similar to those regarding Lithuania. Piłsudski attempted to create an independent Ukrainian state (under tacit Polish tutelage), which would be used as a buffer against Russia and would guarantee Poland’s status as great power. In 1919 the Ukrainian question was seen primarily as a matter of foreign policy and not as a question of “national minorities.” But there was one key difference—whereas the Piłsudczyks were generally skeptical about the Lithuanians’ and Belarusians’ national consciousness and state-building abilities (they inevitably viewed the Lithuanians’ attempts to control their own destiny without Polish ‘help’ as the result of German machinations), the Ukrainians were viewed as fully fledged equals of the Poles. There was little talk of federation, and the focus was squarely on Ukrainian independence.

“With regards to Kiev,” Skwarczyński wrote, “Warsaw should play the same role as with Vilnius, though somewhat less directly—she should be the launching point for the ideal [of liberty] and aid in its realization.”⁷⁸ References to the legacy or traditions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were muted in discussions of the Ukrainian question, which is understandable given the tumultuous history of Polish presence in Ukraine. The history of Polish-Ukrainian friendship was characterized as a noble “quest, long ago neglected and abandoned” by the Polish side.⁷⁹ It was the future, rather than the past, which dictated Polish involvement in Ukrainian affairs. “Piłsudski’s program is based on

his understanding of the needs of the present historical moment and of the role which Poland should play in the historical processes unfolding in modern Europe,” wrote Skwarczyński.⁸⁰

Therefore, again, it was the idea of Poland as an independent subject in world history, which was invoked in justifying Piłsudski’s program. The past, just as in the case of Lithuania, was used to show the potentialities of various future arrangements rather than to legitimate a particular program. The arguments of the Piłsudczyks, Skwarczyński wrote, “carry behind them the weight of the partially successful historical experience of the Republic and the ideas of those who, up to this point, have understood Polish history and culture most profoundly.”⁸¹ Hence, Piłsudski’s program was based on *one* understanding of Polish history; but not the only possible one. Skwarczyński consciously and explicitly emphasized certain aspects of the national heritage and openly condemned and rejected others.

The ultimate justification of the Ukrainian policy, just as in the case of Lithuania, was not simply *raison d’état* but creating a Poland that was “great.” “If we are to become a great nation,” Skwarczyński wrote, “we must learn to think about [nationality conflicts] in terms of our historical mission and from the perspective of [long-term] historical development.”⁸² The term “historical mission” might seem reminiscent of the romantics, and this is partly correct. But for Skwarczyński and his collaborators, the “historical mission” of Poland lacked the metaphysical dimension which it had for poets like Mickiewicz. The “mission” was a certain potentiality, made possible by the trajectory of Polish history. But to be meaningful this potentiality had to be turned into a “concrete”

political project, and this depended entirely on the will and ability of individual historical actors. It depended, in other words, on men like Piłsudski (and Skwarczyński himself), who were actively trying to shape the Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian nations, and bend them to their own will in an act of historical creation.⁸³

The Treaty of Riga was greeted with indignation by the Piłsudczyks, not only because of its surrender of Belarusian territories but, even more so, because it granted Polish recognition to the puppet Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. At the same time, the Poles excluded Semyon Petlura's Ukrainian delegation from the negotiations—a de facto betrayal of their erstwhile allies, who were promptly dispatched to internment camps. Piłsudski, disgusted, called the treaty “an act of cowardice.”⁸⁴ The Treaty also left Poland with some 5 million Ukrainian citizens, many (though not all) of them imbued with a very strong sense of their national identity.⁸⁵ According to the Piłsudczyks, the Ukrainians were a nation in the fullest sense of the term and there was no point in assimilating them to the Polish nation, even in the civic or political sense of that word.⁸⁶ However, since they would be forced to live a Polish state for the foreseeable future, they had to be given the widest possible autonomy. This was dictated both by ethical and pragmatic considerations. In fact, according to thinkers like Bukowiecki and Hołówko, autonomy was simply the surest way to make the Ukrainians into happy and productive citizens of Poland. But this did not mean making them into “civic” Poles—there was a clear distinction here, which scholars too often neglect. Hołówko went so far as to argue that the Polish state should be doing all it could to promote a strong sense of Ukrainian *national* identity among Polish Ukrainians.⁸⁷

In sum, the Piłsudczyks never really made their peace with Riga. They continued to hold out hope that an independent Ukrainian state will arise, comprised of both Polish and Soviet territories. Nonetheless, their advocacy of the Ukrainian cause had its limits. No Polish political figure was willing to surrender Lwów to the Ukrainians, though many Piłsudczyks (and Piłsudski himself) were willing to give up the rest of East Galicia.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the Piłsudczyks always treated the existence of a Ukrainian minority in Poland as something temporary. It was hoped that the creation of an independent Ukrainian state would solve the ‘Ukrainian Question’ in Poland. In the meantime, as Hołówko put it, “it was better to gain the sympathy of 35 million strong Ukrainian nation, than to forcibly polonize 2 million Ukrainians and earn the hatred of the remainder.”

The Jewish Question

Although the Jewish question was identified as one of the key issues facing the new Polish state by *Rząd i Wojsko*, it received very little attention from the journal throughout 1919 and 1920. In fact, there were no significant articles devoted to it, and even those articles explicitly linked to nationality questions, barely mentioned the Jews and focused on the Slavic m⁸⁹minorities. There was a very good reason for this. As we have seen, thus far, the Belarusian-Lithuanian and Ukrainian “questions” were dealt with in the context of Poland’s foreign policy and the multiple wars being waged on the country’s borders.

When the issue of Poland’s Jewish minority did come up in the Piłsudczyk press prior to the Peace of Riga, it was also treated in the context of foreign policy. The main impact of the Jewish minority on Poland’s foreign relations was related to the recurring episodes of

violence against the Jews perpetrated by Polish soldiers which were reported, often in exaggerated form, in the Western press. Obviously, these could have potentially negative consequences for the new Polish state in public opinion throughout the world. However, unlike the National Democrats, the Piłsudczyks did not believe in the existence of an international Jewish conspiracy aimed at undermining Poland. As a result, they by and large did not see the Jewish question, or even the vexing National Minorities Treaty, as a fundamental problem facing the Polish state. It is perhaps for this reason that *Rząd i Wojsko*, which dealt with “big” geopolitical questions and ideological questions, very rarely mentioned the Jews.⁹⁰

Gazeta Polska occasionally commented on anti-Semitic “excesses,” as these were called, committed by Polish soldiers or civilians. These were invariably attributed to the National Democrats and their hateful propaganda and discussed in the context of their impact on foreign policy. A typical article of this sort, entitled “Jewish Beards” began with the ironic reflection that “until the present day, beards had played no role in world politics, and if even the greatest statesman made the claim that answers to the problems of politics or statehood are to be found in the question of beards, he would rightly be called insane.”⁹¹ Yet for Poland, the author lamented, beards had become an important international issue because some Polish soldiers had taken it upon themselves to humiliate the Jews of some small town by cutting off their beards. And while the anonymous author denied that any “pogroms” had taken place, he acknowledged the “shameful” anti-Jewish “excesses.”⁹²

However, the problem of anti-Semitism was generally treated as both epiphenomenal and temporary. According to *Gazeta Polska*, the National Democrats have “for years used slogans of anti-Semitism and the uncompromising struggle with the Jews ... in order to win the allegiance of the dark masses and distract them from question of social justice.” This was both ethically repugnant and damaging to Poland’s international standing. “The entire Polish nation ... which knows better than anyone else how disgusting persecution based on faith or ethnicity can be, is paying for the political past of Mr. Dmowski, for his savage chauvinism and his demagoguery,” the author continued, “[and] foreigners are saddened to see that the ideal of ‘For Your Freedom and Ours’ is turning out so poorly in practice.”⁹³ Anti-Semitism, then, was seen as recent political phenomenon not deeply ingrained in Polish culture.

But while *Gazeta Polska* was extremely critical of anti-Semitism and “shameful excesses” against the Jews, which it attributed to the NDs and their supporters, it also criticized what it saw as the disloyalty exhibited by some Jewish groups, and especially the Zionists, towards Poland.⁹⁴ In fact, while the issue of the Minorities Treaty provided the Piłsudczyks with a platform from which to criticize the Polish nationalists, it also allowed them to level a critique of the “Jewish nationalists,” as Zionists were often called, who were presented as the mirror image of the National Democrats.⁹⁵ The first and most obvious charge was that by going behind the back of the Polish government and lobbying the Western powers directly, the Zionists were behaving treacherously and putting into question the “sovereignty of the Polish state.”⁹⁶

Ironically, the Treaty, and the Zionists' role in its "imposition" upon Poland were condemned most forcefully by those political groups, like the Piłsudczyks, socialists, and peasant radicals from Liberation, which strongly opposed anti-Semitism. The openly anti-Semitic NDs, on the other hand, muted their criticism of the Treaty because it was supported by France. In the final vote in the *Sejm*, treaty was ratified with the votes of the National Democrats and minor centrist parties, while the left voted against it.⁹⁷ The criticisms of the Minorities Treaty anticipated the official line on the Jewish minority which would be articulated by the Piłsudczyks following the Treaty of Riga. With the end of the Polish-Soviet War, and the relative stabilization of Poland's borders, the "Jewish Question" came to be discussed more extensively in the press, largely due to the ever increasing anti-Semitic campaign of the National Democrats. In fact, analyzing their response to the "Jewish Question" is instrumental in understanding the Piłsudczyks' vision of the nation. As minority that could not, like the Ukrainians or Belarusians, be eventually given a state of its own, and was the target of ever-increasing attacks by Polish nationalists, the Jews were the ultimate test of the "inclusiveness" or "civicness" of the Piłsudczyks' imagined community.

It should be noted that all Piłsudczyk writing about the Jews prior to the 1922 election, consistently and unequivocally opposed anti-Semitism. The most important reasons given were universal and ethical ones, rooted in the individualist philosophy articulated by Brzozowski, embraced by the likes of Skwarczyński, Jędrzejewicz, Stpiczyński, Hołowko, or Handelsman, and subscribed to by most Piłsudczyk and

socialist writers. One the most forceful declarations of this sort was offered by Tadeusz Hołowko, a close collaborator of Piłsudski:

Our 'sympathy' towards the Jews is simply the result of our spiritual culture and our respect for the rights of man, as such. We will never accept and we will never stop protesting against treading upon the human dignity of Jews. Cutting off Jews' beards, throwing Jews out of railway cars, mistreating them in the army and discriminating against them in state offices are a shame for Poland.⁹⁸

Indeed, anti-Semitism was seen generally seen as “unethical” and the language of shame (*wstyd, hańba*) was often invoked when discussing anti-Semitic “excesses.”⁹⁹ Given the high place accorded to human dignity, subjectivity, and liberty, and the positive valuation of the tradition of liberty and respect for differences (*tolerancja*) in Polish history on the pages of the ‘official’ Piłsudczyk journals, *Rząd i Wojsko* and *Droga*, such a stance should not be surprising.¹⁰⁰

However, anti-Semitism was also opposed on pragmatic grounds, as being destructive of Polish statehood and, therefore, harmful to the Polish nation. “I cannot think of a civilized state that would push away its own citizens,” wrote Stanisław Bukowiecki.¹⁰¹ By fomenting disorder and setting citizen against citizen, anti-Semitism hurt the interests of all the inhabitants of the state—including the Poles.¹⁰² The ethical and pragmatic considerations went hand in hand. To quote Bukowiecki again:

The program [of economic discrimination against the Jews] would [cause] entire generations to be raised in an atmosphere of hatred and disdain, elevated to the status of national commandments. Such a program would be ethically destructive, lower the moral level of our society and, at the same time, cause us great political harm. Poland has enough old enemies and does not need new ones.¹⁰³

This point brings us to perhaps the most misunderstood dimension of the Piłsudczyk sense of ‘nationness’ – the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Theorists of nationalism have often distinguished between ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ modes of imagining the nation. In this classificatory scheme, the Piłsudczyks are seen as a classical example of the ‘civic’ form of nationalism, in which nationality is defined by citizenship rather than ethnicity. The Piłsudczyks’ approach to the question of whether or not the Jews were Poles can help us interrogate this classic typology.

Perhaps the most important point is that the Piłsudczyks differentiated between “Poles” and “Polish citizens”— these two terms were emphatically not the same. Polishness (*polskość*) was a matter of neither ethnicity nor citizenship, but of culture and volition, with volition being at least partly contingent on culture. Ethnicity and religion didn’t matter one bit, but culture was of paramount importance. Again, Hołówko was the most forceful in making this point while defending Poland’s ambassador to the League of Nations, Szymon Askenazy, from National Democratic attacks:

We have a great historian ... who raised entire generations of Polish historians and broadened the intellectual horizons of the Polish intelligentsia, yet in the [National Democratic daily] *Gazeta Warszawska*, a supposedly highbrow newspaper, we can read the resolutions of various ... butchers, sausage-makers, and shopkeepers, declaring that this historian should not represent Poland in international relations because he has Jewish roots. It doesn’t matter to them that this man taught Polish society to truly love Poniatowski, Łukasinski, and Dąbrowski—any illiterate butcher... has the right to deny him the right to Polishness.¹⁰⁴

Similarly, Bukowiecki believed that the Poles should “accept all the Jews who accept Polishness, with all the consequences thereof, into the fold of the Polish nation.”¹⁰⁵ Of

course, exactly what this entailed could be debated, but most of all it was an act of will and individual choice, in which actively embracing Polish culture played a critical part.

Therefore, to the contrary of what may have been expected from “civic” nationalists, not all Jews were deemed to be Poles; the majority were not. Even according to Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, one the most consistent and prolific opponents of anti-Semitism in interwar Poland, the majority of Jews was more distinct from the Poles, than were the Russians, Germans, Ukrainians, or any other minority or neighbor people.¹⁰⁶ There was little hope of the “dark Jewish masses” and the “dark Polish masses” finding a common language or identity in the foreseeable future.¹⁰⁷ While some may be tempted to perceive a tinge of anti-Semitism in this position, this was not the case. In fact, the vast majority of politically conscious Jews, represented by the Zionists, Folkists, and the Bund, saw themselves as members of the Jewish *nation* and did not aspire to being Poles. In this sense, the position of Polish Jews was fundamentally different, and from the Piłsudczyks’ perspective infinitely more problematic, than that of their co-religionists in most other states. Whereas American Jews were for the most part content to be Jewish Americans, the vast majority of politically active Polish Jews did not at all want to be Jewish Poles.¹⁰⁸

The point for now is that if Bukowiecki did not feel the need to elaborate exactly what it meant to embrace “Polishness with all its consequences,” that was because from the legal and political standpoint it didn’t matter one bit. According to the Piłsudczyks, all Polish citizens were to be treated equally by the state even, or precisely, if they were members of a “national minority.” But on the other hand, there was absolutely no

suggestion in *any* Piłsudczyk publication that simply having Polish citizenship made one a Pole. For example, *Głos Prawdy* forcefully opposed any attempt by the ND-dominated parliamentary commission to change the wording in a parliamentary bill outlining the structure of the armed forces. The original bill made it possible for “any Polish citizen” to become an officer, while the commission wanted to change the wording to “any Pole.” According to *Głos Prawdy*, the attempt was a shameful “nationalist excess” which was both unjust and counterproductive. As the anonymous author (most likely Wojciech Stpiczyński) wrote, “nobody will have the right to expect loyalty from the national minorities, if the state is unjust towards them.”¹⁰⁹ National minorities, then, were to be given the full privileges of Polish citizenship *as national minorities*, not as Poles. Hence, neither citizenship nor ethnicity made one a Pole; culture did.¹¹⁰ To the Piłsudczyks, many people whom the Endeks considered Jews—Szymon Askenazy, Marcei Handelsman, or Feliks Perl, were Poles, despite their “ethnic” background. But most Jews were not, despite their Polish citizenship. Obviously, while the typology of ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ nationalisms may be useful heuristically in some cases, neither term is particularly useful in capturing the Piłsudczyks’ sense of nationness.

Perhaps one of the key problems facing the Polish left was the lack of a collective noun capable of including all “Polish citizens” into a collective community. As Piotr Wandycz notes, while in Britain the distinction between English and British allowed for the creation of an overarching non-ethnically defined political community, while preserving the Englishness for the dominant ethnic group within that community, in Poland there was no equivalent possibility. Citizens who were not defined as Poles had

nothing left save for the awkward, dry, and legalistic “Polish citizen,” a term which could hardly inspire a sense of brotherhood or common identity.¹¹¹

But despite acknowledging that most Jews were not Poles, most Piłsudczyks, and the Polish left in general, failed to recognize them as a nation. The Jews were generally defined as an “ethno-religious” rather than a national group, and thus had to be treated differently than the Belarusians and Ukrainians.¹¹² The logic of this distinction was highly dubious as Tadeusz Hołówko, who bucked the trend and forcefully argued for the recognition the Jews as a nation, pointed out, but its intent was clear.¹¹³ Recognizing the Jews as a separate nationality, Bukowiecki and others feared, would raise barriers to their acculturation and assimilation, which remained the ultimate long term goals. The optimum solution from the Piłsudczyk perspective, was to combine Jewish religious or communal identity with a Polish national one as described by a play on the old adage *gente Judeaus natione Polonus*.¹¹⁴ Even Hołówko hoped for the eventual acculturation and assimilation of Poland’s Jewish community. In fact, his support for “Jewish nationalism” was partly tactical. Hołówko believed that Jewish nationalism was “the battering ram that would break down the walls of the ghetto” and make it possible for the Jewish masses to be integrated (and in the course of generations perhaps assimilated) into Polish society. For now, he preferred a “modern Jewish society, even if it speaks Yiddish, where the tone is set by modern educated men like [the Zionist leader] Grünbaum or [the Folkist leader] Piłucki, rather than by the Tsadik from Góra Kalwaria.”¹¹⁵

In sum, the doors to the Piłsudczyks' conception of Polishness were open, despite the fact that even the most optimistic writers acknowledged that the full integration of Jews into Polish society would take decades. In the short term, then, the goal was to imbue loyalty to the Polish state and spread Polish culture among the Jewish population. In this vein, *Głos Prawdy* supported the right of the Jews to Yiddish education, but expressed the hope that Yiddish would eventually be replaced by Polish. However, it unequivocally opposed giving any state support to Hebrew schools, on the grounds that they enlarged the gulf separating Jews from Poles, and as such were harmful to Polish-Jewish integration.¹¹⁶

Perhaps the most explicit discussions about the nature and definition of the imagined community of Poland took place in the *Sejm*. Yet, paradoxically, even as Piłsudski and his followers controlled Poland's military and foreign policy, they lacked their own representation in the legislature. While many members of the PPS and Liberation saw themselves as ardent Piłsudczyks, bona fide Piłsudczyk publications always maintained that a distinction should be made between their own "line" and that of the two mass parties.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, an analysis of the debates surrounding questions of citizenship and nationality in the *Sejm* is necessary in order to complete any analysis of the national community espoused by the Piłsudczyks and the Polish left.

In parliament, then, the Piłsudczyk line was represented by PPS and "Liberation." But while the latter was perhaps closer to Piłsudski, it was the former, with its infinitely more sophisticated membership and a tradition of political thought, which represented

the left in most theoretical debates. The vision of imagined community held by the PPS, most clearly put forth by the party's young theoretician Mieczysław Niedziałkowski, was virtually identical with the one outlined in the Piłsudczyk publications discussed above.¹¹⁸ In his exposition on articles 112 and 113 of the constitution, which defined the scope of self-government for national minorities, Niedziałkowski recognized the legitimate cultural and national aspirations of the Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Lithuanians, and in somewhat couched language expressed the hope that these peoples will eventually acquire states of their own.¹¹⁹ In the meantime, he hoped to provide them with the widest possible scope of “national-cultural” autonomy. However, he made no attempt to push the boundaries of Polishness so as to include these peoples—they were explicitly designated as “non-Polish.”¹²⁰

The ever burning “Jewish Question,” was also solved in the spirit advocated on the pages of *Rząd i Wojsko*, *Droga*, *Gazeta Polska*, and *Głos Prawdy*. Speaking in the name of the PPS, Niedziałkowski refused to recognize the Jews as a “national” minority and argued that they were merely a “religious” one. As such, he continued, the Jews were entitled to the rights accorded to all citizens and should be free to organize their religious and cultural life as they saw fit. But he was against granting the Jewish community any special collective privileges just as, he claimed, no special rights or public recognition should be given to Catholics or any other religious group.¹²¹

What may be most surprising, however, is Niedziałkowski's emphatic rejection of what we would today call multiculturalism. In response to Zionist deputies calling for greater national autonomy for the Jewish community, he offered the following argument:

Calmly and with a clear socialist conscience, we thoroughly reject all those conceptions in which the Polish state is seen as the common property of Poles and Jews, in the sense in which Belgium is the common property of Walloons and Flemish. We are ready to provide full guarantees for the ethnic minorities scattered throughout the Polish state, but we must maintain the one basic rule, that the Poland is a Polish state only.¹²²

The last sentence received an ovation from the entire *Sejm*, including the National Democratic right. Indeed, it may be tempting to see in Niedziałkowski's statement that Poland is "a Polish state only," a reiteration of the nationalist mantra "Poland for the Poles" and, hence, an acceptance of "ethnic" nationalism. But this is not the case. From the context, it is clear that the term "Polish" was again used in the cultural sense. It is true that it did not include Jews like the Zionists Grünbaum and Hartglass (who in any case did not see themselves as Poles), despite the fact that they were Polish citizens. But on the other hand, it included Jewish Poles, like Niedziałkowski's PPS colleagues Diamand, Perl, and Lieberman. Like the Piłsudczyks, Niedziałkowski and the PPS imagined a Polish nation that was neither civic nor ethnic. Its most important criteria were culture and volition.

The Contradictions of the Civic Nation

Up to this point, I have tried to present the Piłsudczyks' vision of the Polish nation, especially with regards to the Jews, as more complicated than the somewhat rosy multicultural view offered us by some scholars. However, it bears stressing that while the

Piłsudczyks' imagined community of the Polish nation may not have been quite as admirable (by 21st century standards!) as is suggested by the latter interpretation, criticizing it as exclusive or anti-Semitic would be both anachronistic and unfair. In the first place, as Jan Baudouin de Courtenay pointed out, Poland's record with regards to minority rights was superior to that of the established Western democracies, which took the high moral ground and criticized the new Polish state. As De Baudouin de Courtenay aptly pointed out, America's "shameful" treatment of blacks, Britain's oppression of colonial peoples, or France's persecution of Basque and Breton languages had absolutely no parallels in Poland and rendered the Western democracies' critique of the latter morally dubious.¹²³

Secondly, with more specific regard to the Jewish question, it must be remembered that the Zionist demands *vis a vis* the Polish state were historically unprecedented. In fact, I can think of no modern state (including of course the United States which the Zionists often held out as a model for the Poles to emulate) which had ever as much as entertained granting its Jewish community self-government or personal autonomy. This is not to say that the Zionists' demands for personal autonomy and self-government for Poland's Jewish community were somehow illegitimate.¹²⁴ My point here is merely to note that the Piłsudczyks' rejection of them was neither a sign of exclusive nationalism nor of anti-Semitism—it was simply the response which may have been expected from any mainstream progressive political movement in the Western world.

It should now be becoming clear that the Piłsudczyks' conception of the imagined community were neither vague nor anachronistic. But how much do the writings and statements of a small group of Piłsudczyks and PPS activists tell us about the vision of the national community held by the rank and file of the Marshall's followers? As M.K. Dziewanowski writes, despite being "persuasive, inspiring, and magnetic in personal relations, Piłsudski was less skillful in communicating his ideas to the masses."¹²⁵ Indeed, the problem was not lack of ideas but getting them across. While issues of reception will be addressed in the next chapter, before concluding it is important to note how the Piłsudczyk elite conceptualized its relationship with the masses.

The Piłsudczyks saw themselves as being engaged in a battle for the "soul" of the nation, and they were well aware that most Poles did not share their views.¹²⁶ They worried when the National Democrats claimed that Piłsudski's program was "his own but not that of the Polish nation," because they knew that there was an element of truth in this accusation.¹²⁷ And they knew that the decisive factor in the success of all their plans was "the attitude of society" towards developing genuine cooperation and friendly relations with the Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians.¹²⁸ Time and time again, they expressed the fear that the Poles will fail to look "beyond the narrow confines of their borders" while holding out hope that they will yet show "deeper levels of spirit" and understanding.¹²⁹

In fact, the Piłsudczyks saw themselves as a tiny elite facing a fundamentally ignorant and even hostile society. Piłsudski, according to Tadeusz Hołówko, had set into

motion an extremely ambitious plan “by virtue of his genius.” The key question, Hołówko continued, was “whether the Polish nation would understand him and support his plans.”¹³⁰ The tension between elitism and the desire for popular acceptance was one of the fundamental paradoxes of Piłsudczyk politics throughout the interwar period. On the one hand, especially since their experience in the First Brigade, when they felt the Polish nation had turned its back on them, the Piłsudczyks had a very low opinion of the masses. It was only through *their own* action and example, that the masses could be stirred to look beyond their immediate narrow self-interest. In this imagery, Piłsudski *forced* the Poles to become independent. As Skwarczyński wrote, he “took the nation by the shoulders with his iron will, tore the blindfold off its eyes ... and led it towards the sun of liberty, towards action and glory.”¹³¹ In sum, the Piłsudczyks wanted the masses to rise to the high bar they set before them, but they clearly doubted the latter’s capacity to do so.

Yet, the failure of the Piłsudczyks to win the masses’ allegiance for their ideas should not be entirely surprising. The philosophical underpinnings of their view of the imagined community were quite complex—so much so that they seemed to have eluded most historians. *Rząd i Wojsko*, *Droga*, and even *Głos Prawdy* were pitched at a fairly elite level of readership. In fact, as we will later see in the next chapter, it was the very sophistication and complexity of the Piłsudczyk vision of the national community which in many ways can be seen as being responsible for the latter’s failure—especially when contrasted with the simplicity of the National Democratic alternative.

On the basis of this analysis of the Piłsudczyks' vision of the imagined community of the nation it is possible to make a number of generalizations. In the first place, the Piłsudczyks' imagined community of the nation was not simply the result of Piłsudski's own idiosyncratic childhood or nostalgia for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Nor was it as "vague" or "anachronistic," as many scholars suggest. In fact, it was articulated in an intellectually sophisticated manner and in some ways, especially in its self-reflexive social constructivism, was starkly modern. If historians have largely misunderstood this point, it is because they have failed to understand the intellectual underpinnings of the Piłsudczyks' vision of the imagined community and, in particular, the influence of Stanisław Brzozowski on their thought. In fact, the very language of Skwarczyński and other Piłsudczyk writers is incomprehensible without reference to Brzozowski. Without understanding terms like *praca* (labor), *odpowiedzialność* (responsibility), *twórczość* (creativity) as they were used by the latter, the work of Skwarczyński and Jędrzejewicz, in particular, cannot be understood in its full complexity.

For the Piłsudczyks, nations were both constructed and "real." In fact, it was precisely their status as historical cultural creations constructed through generations of human labor, which dictated their importance for an individual's identity. This was as true of the Poles as it was of any other human collectivity. Yet, the Piłsudczyks believed that the particularities of Polish history offered certain traditions, potentialities, and models which could be used to offer a unique contribution to human history as a whole. This made Polish history particularly appealing for them. But it was up to *them* to make use of this historical heritage in a creative fashion.

This brings us to the second point. Contrary to widely held views, nowhere in Piłsudczyk writings can we find appeals to history as a legitimating factor for Polish national aspirations. The multiethnic Jagiellonian tradition and the Republic were to be seen by the Poles as sources of inspiration for ‘creative’ future-oriented action, rather than as sources of legitimacy. It was this creative potential of the nation which became the latter’s fullest philosophical justification—the individual needed to be grounded in the nation (or national culture) in order to act in the world in a meaningful and creative manner. This is why the Piłsudczyks often talked about “what was best” in Polish history, rather than about Polish history as such. For his followers, Piłsudski was a model of the individual who was able to impose his will upon history, bend the latter to his design, and create a new values and forms of human organization.

Third, nowhere in the early Piłsudczyk writings do we find the kind of “transnational” Polish-Lithuanian identities which are so fashionable among scholars today. This is not to say that such identities were not held by particular individuals or even groups, but simply that they played no role in Piłsudczyk discourse.¹³² Hence, it should not be surprising that there was also little of “multiculturalism,” as this term is understood today, in Piłsudczyk thought. Poles were Poles, Lithuanians were Lithuanians, and Ukrainians were Ukrainians in the colloquial sense of all these words. Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians were *not* Poles, even in the ‘political’ or ‘civic’ sense—they were nations which deserved states of their own. Indeed the Piłsudczyks’ insistence on treating these groups as nations (*narody*), a term which implied legitimate aspirations to statehood, rather than nationalities (*narodowości*) was a key difference between them and

the National Democrats. Poland was envisioned as a model or a helper (and in practice a tutor) in the task of state building.

In the meantime, the Piłsudczyks believed, these nations should be offered the space for cultural and national development within the *Polish* state. But there was little talk of “including” these groups in the Polish nation or of constructing an entirely civic Polish nation, in which culture played no role. Ironically enough, writers like Hołówko and Skwarczyński advocated the creation of a “political” or as we would say today, civic, Lithuanian nation, which would include Lithuanians, Poles, and Belarusians. But they had no plan to share “Polishness” or the Polish state with any other group.

It would also be a mistake to read too much transnationalism or multiculturalism into the Piłsudczyks’ approach to Poland’s Jewish community. It is certainly true that Jews were welcome, and encouraged, to join the Polish nation. But, with the notable though somewhat qualified exception of Tadeusz Hołówko, the Piłsudczyks unequivocally rejected the model advocated by Polish Zionists, in which a person could at the same time claim to be of Jewish nationality (*narodowość*) and Polish civic identity (*państwowość*).¹³³ The hope was that the Jews would eventually acculturate, fully embrace “Polishness,” and become Polish in the sense of *narodowość* as well as *państwowość*. Being of Jewish heritage or religion was not an obstacle to becoming Polish, but a sense of belonging to the Jewish *nation* was. Polish nationality was not simply ethnic, but it could not be reduced to citizenship either. This point is crucial in understanding the subsequent development of Polish-Jewish relations.

In sum, the Piłsudczyks advocated for a just treatment of Poland's ethnic minorities not because they subscribed to a "civic" nationalism, in which culture and ethnicity played no role, but because they held themselves to a standard of justice beyond the nation and the state. They hoped to create independent Belarusian and Ukrainian states not because they were nostalgic patriots of the old Commonwealth, but because they believed that this was essential to the creation of the kind of Poland they wanted to see. The condemned anti-Semitism not because they viewed all Jews as Poles ("civic" or otherwise), but because they found it morally repugnant and destructive of the kind of imagined community they hoped to create. As the Piłsudczyk novelist, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski put it: "Our vision of Poland was irrevocably tied to the cause of humanity and we [still] do not want and do not accept any opposition on this point."³⁴In sum, the Piłsudczyk imagined community of the nation was neither as quaint, nor as vague, nor as inclusive, as many historians imagine. Rather, the Piłsudczyks put forth a sophisticated and fundamentally modern discourse which made selective use of history and tradition in the service of constructing a fundamentally new imagined community. However, as we will see, it's very sophistication rendered it both difficult to explain and internally unstable. These factors prove to be among the key causes of its ultimate failure.

¹For more see Janusz Pajewski, *Odbudowa państwa polskiego: 1914-1918* (Warszawa: PWN, 1978), 72-86.

² Kazimierz Władysław Kumaniecki, *Odbudowa państwowości polskiej* (Warszawa: J. Czernecki, 1924), 30-3.

³ Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland*, 53.

⁴ In Warsaw, the "Regency Council," consisting Archbishop Kakowski, Prince Zdzisław Lubomirski, and Count Jerzy Ostrowski, created by the Germans for their puppet Kingdom of Poland in 1917, declared independence on October 7, 1918. Meanwhile on

November 6 in Lublin, followers of Piłsudski, headed by Ignacy Daszyński, Stanisław Thugutt, and Rydz-Śmigły set up the radical Provisional Government of the People's Republic of Poland, which refused to recognize the authority of the Council. In Cracow, the populist General Roja headed the Polish Liquidation Commission, which refused to recognize either the Lublin Government or the Regency Council. A separate Polish council governed the Principality of Cieszyń, while a small "independent" republic was established in Zakopane. The victorious Western allies, on the other hand, recognized only the ND dominated Polish National Committee, which was based in Paris and had no presence on the ground in Poland.

⁵ According to Norman Davies, Piłsudski's authority at the time was of such magnitude that he was the only possible choice for the job. In reality, Piłsudski's rapid assumption of power in the state can be explained by a number of factors. First, he was widely perceived as the embodiment of the struggle for independence. Second, the National Democrats' focus on lobbying the Western powers and belief that independence could only be achieved under their aegis led them to neglect grassroots organizing in Poland. Third, many conservatives believed that Piłsudski was radical enough to satisfy the left's demands but not radical enough to actually bring about a revolution. Finally Piłsudski had the unquestionable loyalty of the only organized armed forces in Poland, the POW and the Legions. Norman Davies, *Boże Igrzysko: Historia Polski*. (Cracow: Znak, 1991), 491.

⁶ SSSU no. 144, May 4, 1920, 5-6.

⁷ The thoughtful and moderate Maciej Rataj argues that the federalist plans created a "gulf" between Polish society and the Piłsudczyks. Maciej Rataj, *Pamiętniki 1918-1927* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1965), 47-49.

⁸ Indeed, in Polish historiography, the term Piłsudczyk is used for followers of Piłsudski only after 1926. Prior to the 1926, the inner circle of Piłsudski's followers is referred to as the *Obóz Belwederski* or "Belvedere Camp," after Belweder, the official residence of Piłsudski while he was the Head of State. However, the term is awkward in English and doesn't capture the extent of Piłsudski's "soft" influence, which stretched well beyond the Belweder. It is also important to point out that the term Piłsudczyk was used to describe followers of the Marshall well before 1926. Hence, it is not inappropriate for historians to use it in this context as well.

⁹ The Legions contained almost no professional soldiers. A sample of 1,215 officers from February 1917 contained the following professions: 3 university professors, 9 teaching assistants, 100 teachers, 106 engineers and architects, 59 medical doctors, 76 civil servants, 27 artists, 29 lawyers and law students, 10 journalists, and 11 poets/writers. Bohdan Urbankowski, *Józef Piłsudski: marzyciel i strateg* (Warszawa: ALFA, 1997), 230.

¹⁰ Urbankowski, *Józef Piłsudski*, 233.

¹¹ Holzer, *PPS: Szkic dziejów*, 91-2.

¹² Marian Żegota-Januszajtis, *Życie moje tak burzliwe: wspomnienia i dokumenty* (Warszawa: Nakł. Jerzego i Krystyny Żetoga-Januszajtisów, 1993), 76.

¹³ Adam Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany* (Londyn: B. Świderski, 1966), 196.

¹⁴ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 36.

¹⁵ For a brief moment, the Warsaw radicals did attempt to create a specifically Piłsudczyk political party. This attempt, which met with a resounding failure, will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁶ Garlicki, *U źródeł obozu belwederskiego*, 5.

¹⁷ *Droga* is discussed by Daria Nałęcz, but unfortunately her article is descriptive rather than analytical. See Nałęcz, “Droga,” 590–1.

¹⁸ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Prasa drugiej Rzeczypospolitej, 1918-1939* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), 70.

¹⁹ Nałęcz, “Droga,” 590, note 9.

²⁰ Nałęcz, “Droga,” 592.

²¹ Paczkowski, *Prasa drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, 66.

²² Paczkowski, *Prasa drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, 64.

²³ Jan Rundbaken, “Charakter myśli Brzozowskiego” *Droga*, February, 1922, 13.

²⁴ Rundbaken, “Charakter myśli Brzozowskiego,” 14.

²⁵ Rundbaken, “Charakter myśli Brzozowskiego,” 17.

²⁶ “Piłsudczycy,” *Rząd i Wojsko*, January 26, 1919. While Józef Piłsudski himself kept an arms-length distance from any attempts by his followers to formulate a concrete ideology or political philosophy, this does mean that he took no interest in such matters and that attempts by his followers to articulate a more concrete intellectual foundation for his movement did not have his tacit support or even input. It is doubtful that an article under such a provocative title could have appeared without Piłsudski’s approval. Nałęcz, “Droga,” 590.

²⁷ “Piłsudczycy,” 1.

²⁸ “Piłsudczycy,” 1.

²⁹ “Piłsudczycy,” 1.

³⁰ “Piłsudczycy,” 2.

³¹ “Piłsudczycy,” 2.

³² “Piłsudczycy,” 2.

³³ “Misja Polski,” *Rząd i Wojsko*, January 19, 1919, 1.

³⁴ “Misja Polski,” 2.

³⁵ “Sprawa Litwy,” *Rząd i Wojsko*, January 12, 1919, 1.

³⁶ “Sprawa Litwy,” 2.

³⁷ “Misja Polski,” 2.

³⁸ Marcelli Handelsman, “O program młodego pokolenia,” *Droga*, February 1922, 16-17.

³⁹ Handelsman, “O program młodego pokolenia,” 23.

⁴⁰ “Misja Polski,” 2.

⁴¹ Marcelli Handelsman, “O program młodego pokolenia,” 17.

⁴² For example, Paruch, *Od konsolidacji państwowej do konsolidacji narodowej*, 57; Nałęcz, “Droga,” 593.

⁴³ Nałęcz, “Droga,” 593.

⁴⁴ Janusz Jędrzejewicz, “Narastanie wartości moralnych,” *Droga*, August 1922, 1.

⁴⁵ Jędrzejewicz, “Narastanie wartości moralnych,” 2.

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- ⁴⁶ Jędrzejewicz, "Narastanie wartosci moralnych," 2.
- ⁴⁷ See Brzozowski, "Trąd Wszepochpolski."
- ⁴⁸ Handelsman, "O program młodego pokolenia," 23.
- ⁴⁹ For example Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood*.
- ⁵⁰ Stanisław Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej: szkic programu* (Warszawa: Wende, 1922), 13–15.
- ⁵¹ "Myśl państwowa," *Głos Prawdy*, September 16, 1922, 515.
- ⁵² One of the major books on the political thought of the Piłsudski bears the contradictory title "Philosophy of Action." Bohdan Urbankowski, *Filozofia czynu: światopogląd Józefa Piłsudskiego* (Warszawa: Pelikan, 1988).
- ⁵³ Action was, of course, the domain of Piłsudski himself.
- ⁵⁴ In fact, the NDs had purposefully done everything possible in order to frustrate Piłsudski's attempts to create an independent Belarus and Ukraine. According to both friends and foes of his vision, Piłsudski's grand design was effectively destroyed at the Peace of Riga. Katelbach, *Spowiedź pokolenia*, 100; Kozicki, *Pamiętnik*, 492.
- ⁵⁵ "W sprawie programu polskiego," *Rząd i Wojsko*, February 12, 1919, 2.
- ⁵⁶ "W sprawie programu polskiego," 2.
- ⁵⁷ Handelsman, "O program młodego pokolenia," 17.
- ⁵⁸ See Dziewanowski, *Joseph Piłsudski; Okulewicz, Koncepcja "międzymorza."*
- ⁵⁹ "Mniejszości narodowe," *Rząd i Wojsko*, June 15, 1919, 2.
- ⁶⁰ Handelsman, "O program młodego pokolenia," 17.
- ⁶¹ "Mniejszości narodowe," 1.
- ⁶² Piłsudski first asked an aide to draft the text of proclamation but, unhappy with the results, wrote it personally. This alone should illustrate its importance for the Polish leader.
- ⁶³ Cited in Miłosz, *Wyprawa w dwudziestolecie*, 15. See also "W sprawie Litwy i Białorusi" *Rząd i Wojsko*, March 2, 1919.
- ⁶⁴ Piotr Wróbel, "The Seeds of Violence: The Brutalization of an East European Region, 1917–1921," *Journal of Modern European History* 1, no. 1 (2003): 140.
- ⁶⁵ While there are well documented acts of violence and murder committed by Polish soldiers against Jewish civilians, scholars agree that figures of these atrocities were inevitably "inflated" in the Western press. For example see Carole Fink, "Two Pogroms: Lemberg (1918) and Pinsk (1919)," in *Varieties of Antisemitism: History, Ideology, Discourse*, ed. by Murray Baumgarten, Peter Kenez, and Bruce A. Thompson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009). See also Morgenthau, *All in a life-time*, 382.
- ⁶⁶ "Drogi rozstajne polityki narodowej," *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 14, 1919, 3.
- ⁶⁷ SSSU no. 38, May 15, 1919, 28.
- ⁶⁸ "Niepodległość czy autonomia," *Gazeta Polska*, July 10, 1919.
- ⁶⁹ "Niepodległość czy autonomia."
- ⁷⁰ "O akcje w sprawie Litwy," *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 18, 1919, .
- ⁷¹ "Duch narodu" *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 4, 1919, 7.
- ⁷² See Mieczysław Pruszyński, "Rozmowa historyczna ze St. Grabskim," *Zeszyty Historyczne* 36 (1976): 38–49.

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- ⁷³ Katelbach, *Spowiedź pokolenia*, 106–108.
- ⁷⁴ There was really no ‘Belarusian Question’ in the Second Republic, in the sense in which there were the Ukrainian and Jewish ‘Questions.’
- ⁷⁵ Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej*, 97–9.
- ⁷⁶ Tadeusz Hołówko, *Kwestia narodowościowa* (Warsaw: Druk. “Robotnika”, 1922), 36–40.
- ⁷⁷ “Nie odwracajmy oczu od wschodu,” *Rząd i Wojsko*, April 4, 1921, 5.
- ⁷⁸ Adam Skwarczyński, “Polska a Ukraina,” *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 25, 1919, 1.
- ⁷⁹ “Do przywódców narodu ukraińskiego” *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 25, 1919, 4.
- ⁸⁰ Skwarczyński, “Polska a Ukraina,” 2.
- ⁸¹ Skwarczyński, “Polska a Ukraina,” 2.
- ⁸² Skwarczyński, “Polska a Ukraina,” 2.
- ⁸³ “Sprawa Litwy,” *Rząd i Wojsko*, January 12, 1919, 3.
- ⁸⁴ Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20* (London: Macdonald, 1972), 100. See also Hołówko, *Kwestia narodowościowa*, 40.
- ⁸⁵ There were important differences in this regard between the Ukrainian territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire (East Galicia), and Russian ones (Volhynia).
- ⁸⁶ Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej*, 126.
- ⁸⁷ Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej*, 126. Hołówko, *Kwestia narodowościowa*, 26.
- ⁸⁸ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 47–48.
- ⁸⁹ Hołówko, *Kwestia narodowościowa*, 40.
- ⁹¹ “Brody żydowskie,” *Gazeta Polska*, July 2, 1919.
- ⁹² “Brody żydowskie.”
- ⁹³ “Brody żydowskie.”
- ⁹⁴ “Niech przyjeżdża!” *Gazeta Polska*, July 18, 1919.
- ⁹⁵ “Traktat gwarantacyjny,” *Gazeta Polska*, July 10, 1919. Indeed, the same assertion was made by Henry Morgenthau, who wrote of the Zionist leaders: “Some were pro-Russian, all were practically non-Polish, and the Zionism of most of them was simply the advocacy of Jewish nationalism within Poland.” Morgenthau, *All in a life-time*, 363.
- ⁹⁶ “Traktat gwarantacyjny” *Gazeta Polska*, July 10, 1919. American Jews were also criticized for their ill-informed, hateful, and counterproductive “Anti-Polish campaign.” “Żydzi amerykańscy i kampania antypolska,” *Gazeta Polska*, July 25, 1919.
- ⁹⁷ According to *Gazeta Polska*, “it is not those who spread anti-Semitic agitation, but precisely those who fight it in the name of the principles of justice, who will oppose this project of creating a new Jewish ghetto in Poland.” “Ratyfikacja traktatów,” *Gazeta Polska*, July 28, 1919.
- ⁹⁸ Hołówko, *Kwestia narodowościowa*, 51.
- ⁹⁹ “Niech przyjeżdża,” *Gazeta Polska*, July 18, 1919; “Wybrki endeckie,” *Głos Prawdy*, March 4, 1921, 218–9; Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej*, 171.

¹⁰⁰ The English word “tolerance” does not quite capture the essence of the Polish *tolerancja*. While the former implies merely a minimum of acceptance, the latter is much more expansive and is more correctly translated as respect. See Porter, *Faith and fatherland*, 5.

¹⁰¹ Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej*, 174.

¹⁰² “Myśl państwowa,” 515.

¹⁰³ Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej*, 171.

¹⁰⁴ Hołówko, *Kwestia narodowościowa*, 53. Szymon Askenazy was a professor at the University of Lwów and one of the most respected Polish historians. Although he was fully acculturated to Polish culture, he also emphasized his Jewish heritage, and saw himself as a Jewish Pole. Piłsudski appointed him as independent Poland’s first ambassador to the League of Nations, which rendered him a lightning rod for right-wing claims that the Jews controlled Poland’s foreign policy. He resigned his position in 1923, when the “Government of the Polish Majority” was formed, and returned to teaching.

¹⁰⁵ Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej*, 176.

¹⁰⁶ “Żydzi a państwowość polska część II,” *Gazeta Polska*, July 26, 1919.

¹⁰⁷ “Żydzi a państwowość polska,” *Gazeta Polska*, July 20, 1919.

¹⁰⁸ The leaders of the Zionists, the most popular Jewish party in Poland, and the Folkists, the only other Jewish party represented in the *Sejm*, viewed the Jews as a nation and demanded national recognition for their community. They also explicitly rejected the claims of self-defined Jewish Poles, such as the socialist Diamand or conservative Steinhaus, to represent the Jews of Poland. For the Zionist leader Yitzhak Grünbaum, neither man represented the Jewish masses and, indeed, neither had been elected by Jewish voters. Ironically enough, Steinhaus, who questioned Grünbaum’s right to speak for the Jews of Poland and offered himself as an example of a “Jewish Pole,” owed his seat to the undemocratic Austrian electoral franchise and was utterly defeated when fully democratic elections were held in Eastern Galicia in 1922. For the fascinating debate between Grünbaum, Steinhaus, and Diamand see SSSU no. 15, March 18, 1919, 796-817.

¹⁰⁹ “Wybryki Endeckie,” 218.

¹¹⁰ For a theoretical articulation of this position see Xenos, “Civic Nationalism.” Clearly, the Piłsudczyks’ imagined community was not quite the “civic” nation described by theorists like Burbaker. Indeed, it seems that writers like Xenos, who lay stress on culture rather than citizenship as the key criterion in defining one’s membership in the nation are much closer to the mark. Nonetheless, even if the Piłsudczyks didn’t automatically accept all Polish citizens as Poles, they were nevertheless imagining a Polish state that was just to all its citizens. This was a significant difference from the national democratic doctrines.

¹¹¹ Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom: a History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹¹² SSSU no. 185, November 16, 1920, 34; Bukowiecki, *Polityka Polski niepodległej*, 173.

¹¹³ Hołówko, *Kwestia narodowościowa*, 63.

¹¹⁴ The literal terms are *szczepowość* or *plemiennosc* which literally refer to “tribal” identities, but the De Courtenay clearly means what we today call ethnicity.

¹¹⁵ Hołowko, *Kwestia narodowościowa*, 40.

¹¹⁶ “Żargon czy hebrajski,” *Głos Prawdy*, December 10, 1921, 27-28.

¹¹⁷ “Pod znakiem wojny domowej,” *Gazeta Polska*, July 23, 1919.

¹¹⁸ Niedziałkowski’s exposition is much more detailed than the PPS Program of 1920, but entirely consistent with the latter. For PPS nationality policy see also Adrian Uljasz, *Myśl polityczna Feliksa Perla* (Lublin: Lubelskie Tow. Nauk., 2005), 198.

¹¹⁹ SSSU no. 185, November 16, 1920, 38.

¹²⁰ SSSU no. 185, November 16, 1920, 37.

¹²¹ SSSU no. 185, November 16, 1920, 36.

¹²² SSSU no. 185, November 16, 1920, 38.

¹²³ Jan Badouin de Courtenay, *Kwestia żydowska w państwie polskim* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Wolnomyśliciela, 1923), 15.

¹²⁴ Such a question lies within the domain of political philosophy and, as such, is beyond the scope of this work. However, it is beyond doubt that the Zionists’ hopes for autonomy in Poland were highly unrealistic.

¹²⁵ Dziewanowski, *Joseph Pilsudski*, 352.

¹²⁶ “Duch narodu” *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 14, 1919, 6.

¹²⁷ *Gazeta Polska*, “Niepodległość czy autonomia?,” July 12, 1919.

¹²⁸ “O akcje w sprawie Litwy” *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 18, 1919, 4.

¹²⁹ “Czy Polska jest republiką ludową?” *Rząd i Wojsko*, January 26, 1919; “Drogi rozstajne polityki narodowej” *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 14, 1919.

¹³⁰ “Równi z równymi—wolni z wolnymi,” *Rząd i Wojsko*, May 4, 1919, 2.

¹³¹ Marian Ujazdowski, “Belweder i Belwederczycy,” *Rząd i Wojsko*, September 17, 1920, 3.

¹³² This would appear to be true of Piłsudski himself. See Józef Piłsudski, “Przemówienie w Wilnie o wspólnych dziejach Polski i Litwy,” in *Pisma zbiorowe*, ed. by Kazimierz Świtalski, vol. 5 (Warszawa: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1937), 236–240.

¹³³ For an example of the Zionist position see Dr. Thon’s speech in the sejm. SSSU no. 185, November 20, 1919. Hołowko believed that Jewish “nationalism” was preferable to religious orthodoxy because becoming “national” and “modern” would make it easier for the Jews to become acquainted with Polish culture.

¹³⁴ Interview with Kaden-Bandrowski in *Wiadomości Literackie*, July 13, 1924, Quoted in Wapiński, *Świadomość polityczna w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, 308.

CHAPTER VI

Anger and Anti-Semitism: The 1922 Parliamentary Elections

In the previous two chapters, I have attempted to present and analyze the discourse of the nation articulated by the followers of Marshall Piłsudski (Piłsudczyks), who presented the main counter-narrative to the National Democratic strain of anti-Semitic nationalism. Obviously, it is tremendously difficult to measure the impact of what people like Skwarczyński, Jędrzejewicz, or Hołówko may have written in elite publications like *Droga* or *Rząd i Wojsko* on the rank and file of Piłsudski's followers and supporters. In other words, the previous chapters can make no claims about how the ideology articulated by the Piłsudczyk elite was consumed at the popular level or how it interacted with rival "imaginings" of the national community, such as those articulated by the National Democrats, in the popular imagination.

In this chapter, I will attempt to move beyond classically understood intellectual history and analyze the contestation of the discursive field of nationalism, as it manifested itself in the struggle for the allegiance of the masses. The 1922 parliamentary and presidential elections offer an unparalleled opportunity to explore the dynamic nature of this contest. Indeed, as we will see, the discursive strategies of both the

Piłsudczyks and the National Democrats were recursively shaped not only in relation to each other, but also in response to both institutional constraints and contingent events.

The 1922 Elections

The parliamentary and presidential elections of 1922, the only complete and free elections held in Poland until 1991, were bound to be seen as a crucial test of strength for various political parties attempting to implement their own vision of the imagined community. However, they are rarely portrayed as such in the historiography. When discussing the conflict between proponents of different conceptions of the Polish nation, scholars tend to exclusively utilize the framework of intellectual history, and often neglect the role of events in dynamically shaping and transforming the discursive field of nationalism.¹ As a result, the axis of conflict in Polish political life is generally presented as a strictly ideological one, whether the struggle is seen as being waged between the “left” and the “right,” the “socialists” and the “nationalists,” or simply between Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski, the two political giants who, in the eyes of their followers, embodied entire philosophical systems. In this chapter, I will present the argument that while the axis of Polish politics can indeed be conceptualized in a number of ways, focusing solely on the ideological dimension misses its central issue, at least as the latter manifested itself to contemporaries. Indeed, as I will show, the key axis of political struggle in Poland had little to do with social, political, or economic programs or positions. Rather some of the most fundamental and intractable conflicts in Polish

politics revolved around highly mythologized questions of national identity, and took place in the emotive and symbolic realms.

To be sure, as seen in the previous chapters, the elites put forth competing visions of the imagined community of the Polish nation. The most important of these visions, those articulated by the National Democrats and the Piłsudczyks, were grounded in elaborate and sophisticated ideological systems. However, as we will see, on the level of mass politics these discourses were transformed and presented in a very different light. Thus, I will present the argument that the key to political mobilization, especially but not exclusively on the right, was identity politics, premised on a strongly polarized, Manichean, vision of the social world, divided between a good “us” and an evil, alien “them.”

In this chapter we will examine popular media—daily newspapers, electoral pamphlets, and speeches at political rallies, and attempt to understand how the Piłsudczyks, National Democrats, and other groups, contested the discursive field of Polish nationalism at the popular level. Because much of the popular agitation (flyers, speeches, etc.) took place at the local level, the focus will be narrowed down to Warsaw—the site of the government, the most intense campaigning, and the riots which rocked the entire country in the aftermath of the elections.

In order to undertake an adequate analysis of the role of the 1922 election, we must understand both the institutional context of the elections and the meaning assigned to them by different forces in Polish society. The idea of parliamentary politics had old roots

in Poland—the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s *Sejm* was the most powerful, though certainly not the most effective, parliament in early modern Europe. But the *Sejm Ustawodawczy* (Constitutional *Sejm*) convened by Piłsudski in 1919 was a fundamentally new body, elected by a society with very little experience of parliamentary politics. Indeed, only some deputies were elected by universal franchise. East Galicia, which was still in the throes of fighting between Poles and Ukrainians, was represented by Polish deputies from the Austrian *Reichstag*, who had been elected under a rather conservative electoral franchise. The Prussian provinces were also initially represented by Polish deputies to the German *Reichstag*. There were no deputies from the eastern borderlands (the voivodeships of Volhynia, Polesia, and Nowogródek) or from Upper Silesia.² As a result of these areas’ exclusion, the Constitutional *Sejm* had almost no national minority representation, save for ten Jewish deputies and two German ones.

Free but chaotic elections were hastily organized in the former Congress Kingdom, which brought forth deputies entirely unfamiliar with the workings of a parliamentary system. According to Maciej Rataj, a Liberation and later Piast deputy, peasants in the Congress kingdom, who had no experience with democracy whatsoever, often cast their votes based on rather dubious considerations.³ The *Sejm* itself was a predictably raucous affair. Deputies frequently switched party loyalties, while the parties appeared to be in a constant state of flux.⁴ Only the PPS, with its tradition of party discipline, seemed immune to the constant splintering which affected other parties. This instability, combined with the polarized political situation in the country as a whole and the lack of a clear majority on either the left or the right, brought about a series of short-lived and

unstable governments. Between 1919 and the Constitutional *Sejm*'s resolution in 1922, there were eight cabinets, and no stable ruling majority ever materialized.

The Constitutional *Sejm* was a unique creation, intended solely to prepare the constitution and lay the groundwork for the election of a "normal" *Sejm*.⁵ All parties contesting the 1922 elections believed that the latter would usher in a new era of stability and majority governments. Not surprisingly, each one believed that *it* would constitute this majority.⁶ And, at any rate, it was clear that the elections of 1922 would be the first normal elections ever held in Poland.⁷ As such, a clear victory would give the winner a wholly different level of legitimacy than any party could have hoped for in 1919.

The elections, and the parliament they would create, were also uniquely important for another reason. The Treaty of Riga, which ended the Polish-Soviet War, brought peace and a sense of relative stability to the new state for the very first time in its existence. At the same time, the treaty, even more than the outcome of the military operations, effectively destroyed Piłsudski's grand vision of creating independent Ukrainian and Belarusian states. The Poland created at Riga would be just under two thirds Polish, and would include sizeable Ukrainian, Jewish, German, and Belarusian minorities. Therefore, there would now be no escaping from the burning question: the new multiethnic Polish state would have to decide how to deal with its non-Polish citizens. The constitution created by the 1919 parliament, had left this question deliberately vague and open-ended.⁸

While each party assumed that the new elections would bring about a decisive majority and a stable government, in retrospect it appears obvious that these hopes were

misplaced, not only because of the polarization of society and the fragmentation of political parties, but also because of the peculiar electoral system adopted by the 1919 *Sejm*. Since this system was to have a profound impact on the election results, and on the very creation of the controversial Bloc of National Minorities, it is worth to pause for a moment in order to consider its genesis.

The parliamentary elections would be held under the D'Hondt system, used in Belgium, which tends to provide a roughly proportional representation, slightly skewed in favor of large parties.⁹ However, thanks to National Democratic influence, the Polish electoral law introduced two additional provisions which were to play a fateful role in the elections.¹⁰ First, the *Endeks* were able to map out voting districts in which urban areas were divided and small parts of them attached to rural districts. It was hoped that this arrangement would reduce the presence of both Jews and socialists, who comprised large voting blocs in urban areas, in the new parliament. Second, in addition to deputies elected in particular districts, each party could submit a nation-wide list known as the "state list." Deputies from the state list would be accorded proportionally (again with a slight bias in favor of larger parties) only to those parties which managed to introduce deputies from six or more electoral districts. The National Democrats and their allies on the right hoped that this measure would not only create a more stable government but also result in diminishing the representation of Jews, Ukrainians, and Belarusians.¹¹ This decision caused panic among the minorities, who believed that they would not be able to win any of the seats from the state list, and would therefore find themselves

underrepresented in parliament. As we will see, this fear played a key role in the minorities coming together to create a joint voting list.¹²

Yet another aspect of the constitution which would play a crucial, and unexpected, role in bringing about the crisis of 1922 pertained to the powers and election of the president. Because the right feared that the charismatic Piłsudski would become president, the powers of the latter were purposefully weakened. As a result, the role of the president was largely representative and symbolic—executive power was vested in the office of the premier, who was responsible to the *Sejm*. Perhaps even more important, from Piłsudski's own point of view, was a provision which prevented the president from becoming the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, even in times of war. Instead, the armed forces were subordinated to the Minister of Military Affairs, who in turn appointed the Commander in Chief. This proviso was included specifically to minimize the control Piłsudski could exercise over military affairs in the event he was elected president.¹³

The election of the president was also arranged so as to minimize the legitimacy of the office and weaken the possibility of Piłsudski being elected. Instead of a direct popular election demanded by the PPS, "Liberation," and other leftist groups, which would presumably have allowed the president to appeal to "the people" over the heads of the parliamentary deputies, the president was to be elected by a combination of the two houses of parliament (known as *Zgromadzenie Narodowe* or National Assembly). Again, this provision was intended to ensure the ultimate supremacy of the parliament.

It is very telling that the National Democrats had more faith in their ability to win the parliamentary elections than the presidential ones. While they possessed a powerful and well-funded electoral “machine,” which the parties of the left (except for the PPS) did not, they lacked a leader who could match Piłsudski’s personal charisma. As we will see, these tactical considerations would produce entirely unexpected results and turn the presidential election into a crucial symbolic contest between different conceptions of the imagined community of the Polish nation.

Emotions and Politics

At this point it may be instructive to propose a theoretical framework which would allow us to make sense of the competing narratives articulated during the elections. Specifically, it is important to understand why the seemingly outlandish claims of the National Democrats that all things bad in Poland were the fault of the Jews could carry so much traction on the popular level. A compelling explanation of identity politics is offered by David Ost, who argues that politics, at its heart, is concerned with the articulation and mobilizing of anger. According to Ost, *all* politics is permeated and motivated by anger:

Politics does not become angry only when non-elites shout. Anger is built into politics through the everyday activities of political parties, which continually both stoke and mobilize anger in order to gain and maintain support. ... Anger always exists (often latently) as a result of economic inequalities. Since so many people in all societies believe that compensation differences do not accord with their notions of justice (such as remuneration according to effort, merit, or community value), there is always a large amount of popular frustration and discontent ready to be

tapped. Capturing that ‘economic anger’ is a key way of attracting supporters.¹⁴

Therefore, politics is not simply about the aggregation of interests. Rather, Ost writes, “people understand their interests only within a given narrative framework that offers an explanation of what is wrong” with their society, and how it can be made better. Politics, therefore, is about getting people to accept one’s narrative of what is wrong and, equally important, who is to blame.¹⁵ Anger can be articulated and mobilized in very different ways, depending on whose narrative of what is wrong one accepts and chooses to act on.

To understand Polish politics in the interwar period we need to learn how people *understood* their interests. As Ost writes, “if I am persuaded, as were many Europeans a century ago, that Jews prevent me from living a good life, then persecuting or eliminating Jews comes to be in my interest.”¹⁶ As will shortly become clear, the National Democrats’ political activity amounted almost exclusively to getting the Poles to accept precisely such a narrative, bolstered by the additional provision that non-National Democratic political parties were Jewish proxies or “stooges.” The mass based parties of the left, conversely, offered a more economic narrative. The problem, for them, was the domination of the Polish economy by large landowners and big business. These were two very different diagnoses of society’s ills—and two very different ways of channeling anger. Indeed, anti-Semitism and radical economic reforms were sometimes explicitly presented as two possible ways of channeling the citizenry’s anger, by Polish politicians.¹⁷ As I will argue, the core of the Piłsudczyk movement, which eschewed the populism of the mass-based

left-wing parties, failed to win public support largely because it failed to provide a convincing narrative capable of channeling the masses' anger.

While Ost grounds his theoretical observations in an analysis of post-communist Poland, his insights are equally applicable to almost any capitalist society, and especially one experiencing rapid change. Capitalism, especially in its early stages, always generates “economic anger.” This is a normal response to the breakdown of pre-capitalist or non-capitalist social relations and the rise of new and unprecedented inequalities, which are no longer legitimated by “traditional” religious ideologies. As writers from Ernest Gellner to Benedict Anderson remind us, nationalism itself is often interpreted by scholars as the result of, or a response to, the breakdown of traditional society.¹⁸ Obviously, variables such as anger cannot be “measured,” especially in historical settings. Still, while it is often idealized by right-wing Polish historians today, there is no doubt that the interwar Second Republic was a particularly angry place.

For starters, Poland, especially in the former Russian parts, had just undergone a belated but extremely rapid industrialization. In the Congress Kingdom, the demographic and cultural core of the Polish lands, industrialization and modernization began much later than in western or even central Europe but, starting in the last quarter of the 19th century, proceeded at a breakneck pace. Economic growth was spurred by the development of railways and new protectionist policies implemented by the Russian government, which increased the competitiveness of Polish industry in central Russian markets. Between 1850 and 1919, the population of Prussian Poland rose by 61%, Galicia by

85%, and the Russian Congress Kingdom by 173%.¹⁹ Urbanization proceeded at an even faster rate; between 1865 and 1897, the demographic growth of Russian Poland amounted to 77%, while urban population increased by 131%.²⁰ The spiritual ferment ushered in by this transformation is discussed by Jerzy Jedlicki in his seminal work *The Suburb of Europe*, and can readily be seen in novels from the period, such as Władysław Reymont's *Promised Land*.²¹

There were additional contingent factors, which go beyond Ost's Marxist-inspired model but do not contradict it, that contributed to making interwar Poland a particularly angry place. First, was the widespread devastation caused by World War I, the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1919, the Polish-Soviet war of 1920, and a host of other minor conflicts that plagued the Polish lands in the late 1910s. The almost constant warfare undermined an already fragile economy, resulted in widespread violence, raised ethnic tensions between Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews, and contributed to the breakdown and "brutalization" of traditional communities.²²

But, somewhat paradoxically, even national independence itself was partly responsible for the creation of anger. In the first place, the existence of Poland as a separate state created new and unprecedented economic problems. After 120 years of integration into separate economic organisms, Poland simply did not make sense as an economic unit. The industry of the former Congress Kingdom, especially textiles, was geared for export to the Russian market, which disappeared entirely after the revolution. Conversely, the former Prussian provinces, by far the wealthiest part of the new state,

were focused on the provision of agricultural products to the industrial cities of Reich. Poor political relations between the new Polish state and Germany soon led to a tariff war between the two countries, which cost the farmers of Poznan and Pomerania the market for their goods. High inflation virtually wiped out people's life savings, while government officials in Galicia (Poles rarely held government posts in Germany and Russia) lost their jobs and pensions. In sum, most Poles were economically much worse off in independent Poland than they were before the war as citizens of Austrian, German, and Russian states.

The wars, dislocations, and population movements, which culminated in the collapse of traditional political authorities also created, at least for some Poles, a feeling of lawlessness and the loosening of traditional moral and communal bonds. As Maciej Rataj notes in his memoirs, Poland witnessed "terrible moral destruction" not only as a result of the war but also "the events of 1918."²³ The stories of anti-Jewish pogroms, which rocked many hitherto peaceful communities between 1918 and 1920, are fairly well known, but it is often forgotten that similar episodes of violence and robbery were perpetrated by Polish Christians against other Polish Christians. According to Rataj, military jails were "full of young officers accused of theft, robbery, or stealing army property ... brave officers, caught robbing peaceful citizens."²⁴

Yet another political emotion experienced by Poles during the century of Austrian, Russian, and Prussian rule was hatred. Indeed, Piłsudczyk writers often invoked the reservoir of hatred "built up by the oppressed Polish nation" against the Russian and German occupiers in order to explain the shortcomings of political culture in democratic

Poland and the successes of the hate-mongering National Democrats.²⁵ With the achievement of independence, the hatred and anger formerly directed against the partitioning powers would now need to be sublimated or transferred onto a new target.

Indeed, independence ushered in what Ost calls a new “anger regime.” Under, the partitions, power was, or at least appeared to be, transparent. All problems could be blamed on Russia, Germany, or Austria, and hatred of the latter three was widely seen as legitimate.²⁶ In the independent, democratic, Polish state, power became, to use Ost’s term again, “opaque.” It was not clear who was in charge or who was responsible for the rampant inflation, dropping standards of living, inefficient public administration, and the host of other issues making everyday life increasingly difficult. Was it Piłsudski, the Head of State? The ever-changing governments? The divided and fractious parliament? Or perhaps it was the “speculators,” “war profiteers,” or “exploiters” who were responsible for the post-independence economic difficulties? Polish press of the period was riddled with reports of hoarding, profiteering, and all sorts of swindles (many though not all of which were blamed on individuals with Jewish last names). Conspiratorial stories of sabotage, betrayal, and theft abounded in all quarters, including the *Sejm*. Even in the contemporary Western world, economic processes are often explained by reference to the machinations of shadowy groups and organizations, controlling the world from behind the scenes. In times of crisis, transition, and uncertainty such claims can only be expected to intensify. This was certainly true in early independent Poland.

Thus Poland contained ample reservoirs of hatred and anger. A portion of these emotions had been finding an outlet in anti-Semitism since at least 1905. But when older targets of popular anger, the partitioning powers, disappeared, the anger itself did not dissipate. If anything, it increased as a result of the chaos and instability which accompanied independence. At the same time, democracy opened up an entirely new space in which diverse narratives attempting to channel or mobilize anger could openly compete.

The traditional approach to understanding identity based social movements, rooted in the disciplines of sociology and political science, is constituted by the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT or RM).²⁷ According to RM theorists, the *content* of political identities and narratives is largely irrelevant. Rather, what matters most, is the resources available to the proponents of any particular narrative. Therefore, an RMT perspective might emphasize factors such as the support given to National Democratic politicians by the clergy, or the socialists' access to factories and networks of industrial workers. To be sure, these factors are indeed extremely important in understanding political mobilization and cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, without reference to the *content* of particular political narratives, RM explanations can become circular. Why did anti-Semitism become so successful Poland? RM theorists would surely answer that it was because the National Democrats were supported by the clergy and large landowners. But why did the clergy and large landowners support anti-Semitic groups? Was it because they believed that it was in their *interests* to do so? This is obviously true, but it doesn't tell us much. To answer this question in a meaningful way, we must first come to

understand how these groups *defined* their interests and what role anti-Semitism played in their understanding of the latter.

In the case of 1920s Poland, the *content* of the narratives proposed by competing political forces was fundamentally important in determining which of them would triumph, both at the ballot box and on the “streets.” As Ost notes, not all narratives are equally plausible: “Brazilians will have a hard time believing that Norwegians are responsible for declining wages, and any political entrepreneur proposing such an enemy is not likely to be in politics for very long.”²⁸ Of course, to be “plausible,” a narrative doesn’t have to be true. Indeed, the National Democratic narrative of the Jewish domination of Poland was successful because of its simplicity and clarity and, most importantly, because it was able to direct vaguely articulated anger at a very particular and personal target.

The National Democrats and the Politics of Hatred

For the 1922 elections, the National Democrats organized themselves into a party called the *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy* (National People’s Union or ZLN).²⁹ The name was intended to help entice new members, who may have found the National Democratic brand overly polarizing, and represented a broader strategy to unify the right and center-right under the NDs’ leadership.³⁰ The strategy was a new one and represented a certain shift of the balance of power within the National Democratic movement. Indeed, while the ZLN recognized Dmowski’s authority, key roles in the party’s leadership were played

by politicians from former Galicia, who had greater experience working within the parliamentary system. Most important among them were Stanisław Grabski and Stanisław Głąbiński, who jointly led the parliamentary representation of the ZLN from 1919 until 1926.

Prussian Poles, such as Marian Seyda and Wojciech Trąmpczyński, also played prominent roles in the party, especially since former Prussian Poland was a virtual National Democratic fief. Poles from the former Congress Kingdom, who often had the most direct ties to Dmowski himself were amply represented, but generally did not occupy prominent positions within the party, largely due to their lack of political experience.³¹ They did, however, have a key impact on the ND press, and specifically its largest organs, the *Gazeta Warszawska* and *Gazeta Poranna*.³² The most important exception was Father Kazimierz Lutosławski, a physician, priest, and scout leader from Łomża, who was one of the party's most effective (and rabidly anti-Semitic) parliamentary speakers. As we will see, the leadership of the Galicians, who espoused a more cautious parliamentary style, would lead to some frictions within the party.

In order to maximize their take of the vote under the D'Hondt electoral law and the "state-list" system, which was skewed towards larger groups, the ZLN entered into a coalition with two likeminded parties. The first of these was known as the *Stronnictwo Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe* (Christian-National Party or SChN). Its key politicians were Edward Dubanowicz and Stanisław Stroński. Dubanowicz, an old time National Democrat, who had been active in the National League since 1904, was virtually

indistinguishable from his fellow Endeks from the ZLN, save for a more open advocacy of landowners' interests. Stroński, a renowned professor of French literature, was also editor of the *Rzeczpospolita*, one of Warsaw's largest dailies. The SChN was more economically conservative than the ZLN (it opposed land reform outright, whereas the ZLN was prepared to tactically accept the parcellation of some great estates), but in all other respects the two parties' profiles were nearly identical.³³ Political enemies called the SChN a front (*przybudówka*) of the National Democrats.

The third partner in the coalition was the *Stronnictwo Chrześcijańsko-Demokratyczne* (Christian Democratic Party or ChD), which was led by the wealthy and charismatic Silesian politician Wojciech Korfanty. The Christian Democrats saw themselves as "centrist" and were closer to the Church hierarchy than the Endeks. In subsequent years, the Christian Democrats would go on to chart an independent course and could sometimes be counted on to side with the parties of the center, but in the 1920s the party "was still only gradually emancipating itself from its dependence on the National Democrats."³⁴

Another organization which did not contest the elections, but played an "auxiliary" role in the National Democratic camp was the *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Handlu Przemysłu i Rzemiosła* (Association for the Development of Commerce, Industry, and the Trades), popularly known as *Rozwój* or 'Development.'³⁵ Despite the lofty name and its membership consisting primarily of university students, *Rozwój* was dedicated almost exclusively to spreading anti-Semitism. It produced flyers and "literature," but its

members were happiest staging street protests and beating up Jews.³⁶ One of the most important *Rozwój* activists, Konrad Ilski, was also the leader of the Warsaw branch of the ZLN. As we will see, the organization played an important role in the mobilization of National Democratic activists.³⁷

In order to make maximal use of the D'Hondt system, the ZLN, SChN, and the Christian Democrats combined into a so-called 'voting bloc' and presented a joint voting list to the electoral commission. This new entity was awkwardly labeled as the *Związek Chrześcijańskiej Jedności Narodowej* (The Christian Union of National Unity, ChZJN, or ChJN) and was dominated by the ZLN. Its enemies quickly turned its initials (ChJN) into the moniker *Chjena*, which sounds almost exactly like the Polish word for "hyena" (spelled *hiena*), and the appellation was used almost universally in left-wing papers, flyers, and publications. During the elections, the ChJN was also known as *ósemka* or "List Number 8," after the number provided by the electoral commission.³⁸ Nevertheless, in most left-wing and centrist publications, the terms National Democracy, *Endecja*, and *Endek* continued to function, thus emphasizing continuity between the National Democratic tradition and the new party structures.

My goal is not to provide yet another rendition of National Democratic ideology or of the ZLN's official program, but to attempt to understand how the NDs conceptualized the imagined community of the Polish nation and to attempt to access their emotive universe. One possible way to gain better insight into the emotive realm of the followers of the *Endecja* at the grass roots level, to is to shift focus away from the realm of

“ideology” and political programs, as propounded by the movement’s theoreticians and political leaders, and turn to the level of mass consumption. Obviously studying speeches, electoral flyers, or articles in the popular press, cannot tell us exactly how they were received. Nonetheless, if read with a dose of empathy, they certainly can tell us a lot about what their authors *thought* the recipients wanted to see or hear. Thus I will attempt to present the relationship between the producers and consumers of ND electoral materials in a dialogical manner, with the goal of accessing the symbolic and emotive universe of the latter.

For many, the National Democratic movement is nearly synonymous with political anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, most Polish scholars draw a sharp distinction between the supposedly “moderate” anti-Semitism of the early 1920s and its more radical version which came to dominate nationalist discourse in the 1930s.³⁹ One could perhaps gain such an impression from following the public utterances of the Galician Endek leaders like Głabiński or Grabski or from certain tactical maneuvers, such as support for the National Minorities Treaty, of the National Democrats’ parliamentary representation. Unfortunately, such a view cannot be maintained if one takes even the most cursory glance beyond the arena of old fashioned political history.

In the election campaign, the ChZJN enjoyed a substantial advantage over its rivals, in its ability to produce and utilize electoral literature and propaganda, largely because it had received the generous financial support of many wealthy landowners and aristocrats.⁴⁰ One possible and hitherto underutilized source for understanding National

Democratic discourse on the popular level is constituted by a collection of propaganda flyers produced by the Union of Christian-National Unity for the 1922 parliamentary election.⁴¹ The leaflets were clearly aimed at the popular level; they are short, use simple language, and many contain the admonition to “read this and pass it on to a friend.” While we obviously don’t know how potential voters may have responded to them, the very fact that the NDs chose to present their message in a certain manner is revealing of how they thought the voters *would* respond.

The *leitmotif* of the flyers is the call for “national unity,” a theme which is expressed primarily through attacks on “the Jews,” the eternal evil “others” of the National Democratic imagination. In fact, the Jews constitute the focus of the vast majority of extant flyers, which reveal a vision of the social world that is even more highly polarized and mythologized than the study of “official” National Democratic ideology or political programs would lead one to expect. What may be surprising is the specific manner in which “the Jews” were used as a rhetorical device that could be deployed against *any* other political force in Polish politics. This was done in two crude but rhetorically somewhat ingenuous ways, which are revealing of the emotive universe of the ND electorate. First, using a cliché that went back to 1905, the socialists and other left-wing parties were depicted as being Jewish proxies.⁴² Second, centrist and center-right parties were accused of breaking up “national” or “Christian” unity and thus indirectly helping the Jews gain control of Poland. In this manner, the National Democrats were able to portray themselves as the *only* truly Polish party. This strategy focused on identity politics

as opposed to concrete political demands and basically freed the NDs from the need to present *any* positive programs or policies.

Leaflets containing straightforward anti-Semitic propaganda, and directed solely against “the Jews,” are actually relatively rare and are perhaps the simplest to analyze. For example, a flyer entitled “What does Poland need?” offered a catalog of grievances against “leftist” governments.⁴³ The remedy was straight forward: “As long as there is order in the treasury, good money, cheap credit, police cracking down on thievery and banditry, courts curtailing speculation, the railways running on time, and the development of educational facilities, especially in the trades—the nation will take care of the rest by itself.” And the reason why these issues haven’t been addressed is even more simple—Polish parties are divided and the nation itself is in a state of “economic slavery” to the Jews. Given this diagnosis of the plight of the Polish nation, the solution offered by the leaflet is equally straightforward. It consists of three points. First, the government should support “Christian enterprise.” Second, Poland must become “a truly Catholic state.” Finally, the “most important” point is “ensuring unity in the nation” and creating “a majority determined to defend the entire nation in the *Sejm* and Senate.” If these conditions are created, the flyer implies, making the trains run on time will not pose a problem.

Another flyer lists examples of supposed mismanagement of the economy by previous governments, which are described as “leftist.”⁴⁴ Yet, the flyer offers no practical advice on how to remedy these problems. Instead it concludes by stating that a “weak and

poorly governed Poland will fall prey to the Jews, [b]ut if we all stand under the sign of the cross and national unity—POLAND will win!” Perhaps the most sinister of the flyers presents the voters with the specter of an extensive and international Jewish conspiracy.⁴⁵ The Polish left is mentioned only insofar as it marches “under the command of international Jewry” which seeks to extend its rule “over the entire world.” According to the flyer, only “the unity of the Polish nation” can “save us from Jewish slavery.” And unity can only be achieved if all Poles vote for the ChZJN.

More sophisticated (and more common) flyers utilized the bugbear of “the Jews” in order to directly attack specific Polish parties. One typical tactic, which was a staple of the National Democratic arsenal since the revolution of 1905, was to attack the PPS by portraying its leaders as Jewish proxies. A typical flyer, directed to “Polish workers,” contained the following admonition:

The PPS is running **the Jew Feliks Perl**, the editor of the [PPS newspaper] *Robotnik* as its candidate in Warsaw. Polish workers, are you not ashamed that a **Jew should be your representative from the capital of Poland?** You now have proof as to whose command the socialists would like to see you under. Do you want our nation too, to be ruled by Lejb-Trockis and Radek-Sobelsons [Bold in the original]?⁴⁶

Even more sophisticated flyers, which superficially appeared to discuss specific economic issues, inevitably ended up in realm of myths, symbols, and identities. This is illustrated most clearly by a flyer which claimed to explain to the voters the ChZJN’s position on rent controls.⁴⁷ The flyer’s purported goal was to dement socialist claims that the ChZJN wanted to end rent controls in Warsaw. Its message began rationally enough—it admitted that the ChZJN *did* indeed propose to end “full” rent controls. However, it

would do so only to replace “full” controls with “fair” ones, and the flyer argued that this was actually in the workers’ economic interest. If landlords were unable to raise the rent, they would not invest in building new dwellings or repairing existing ones, and thus housing shortages were bound to continue. But the clinching argument was left until the end. Why would the Socialists want to maintain rent controls, the flyer asked rhetorically? Because the PPS “and the Jews who control it” want the housing shortage to go on! “But why?” the flyer asks. Only now the true reason for the workers’ economic misery became apparent. According to the flyer, “the Jews” were scheming to buy up all the dwellings cheaply, while rent controls were in effect. Then, once in power, the PPS itself would free rent controls in order to gouge the workers and destroy the Polish middle class. “And what will socialist papers write about it then?” asks the flyer rhetorically. “Whatever ... Perl and Diamand order them to!”

Other flyers equating the Jews with socialism were much less subtle. One example was a flyer destined for use in the Senate election, entitled, “To workers who voted for lists #2 [PPS] and #5 [the Piłsudczyk National-Civic Union]!”⁴⁸ It began by informing its readers that some 50,000 Jews also voted for the latter two parties. While it was not clear how this number was arrived at, the leaflet implied that voting for these lists must somehow have been in the interests of the Jews. Having insinuated the link between the Jews and the two parties, it went on to pose the following question: “Do you want Poland to be ruled directly and indirectly by Jews?” If not, the answer was to vote for the ChZJN.

Whereas the Socialists were attacked for being controlled by Jews, or simply *being* Jews, parties of the political center were castigated for “splitting the Polish vote,” which indirectly helped the Jews control Polish society. Thus, a flyer entitled “A Call to the Workers” claimed that “even today the Jews rule us ... secretly ... [but] if even more Jews and socialists enter the *Sejm* and Senate, our future will be even worse.”⁴⁹ It then went on to attack politically centrist parties for supposedly breaking up “our unity.” A similar leaflet directed to “the tradesmen and merchants of Warsaw” attacked the centrist parties for splitting the Polish vote, which could possibly lead to a Jewish senator being elected in Warsaw.⁵⁰ From this single particular electoral contest, the flyer extrapolated a global threat to the Polish nation. “Polish electors,” it concluded, “defend Poland from universal Jewish invasion!”

A separate category of leaflets was directed at “Polish women.” As in many European countries at this time, the left, including the socialists, had actually resisted granting women the right to vote. The rationale was that women were more devout than men, and were more likely to vote according to the recommendations of the Parish priest. The National Democrats made full use of this fact in their electoral agitation, but even here they could not resist resorting to the “Jewish Question.” A typical pamphlet began with a quote from a socialist newspaper, “edited by the Jew, Haecker, and the socialist, Daszyński,” which had attacked the right of women to vote in Poland. “Polish women,” the pamphlet went on, “if you do not want Jews and socialists to insult your feelings [and] mock your religious convictions ... vote for [ChZJN].”⁵¹

Only a handful of surviving electoral pamphlets published by the ChZJN are free of attacks on the Jews. However, they still do not contain *any* positive or programmatic material and focus, instead, on personal attacks against politicians of the left and center, most notably Piłsudski and Wincenty Witos, or against centrist parties which are, again, accused of splitting the “national” vote.⁵² As we will see, this is in stark contrast to the electoral materials presented by the left which, in many cases, sought to explain substantive policy positions.

The anti-Semitic obsession of the ChZJN was so characteristic of the party that it was used *against* it by its rivals. A fake ChZJN flyer, masterfully printed in the exact same style as the official ones, proclaimed the following:

Vote for ... the Union of Christian National Unity, which represents everything in Poland that deserves the appellation of Polish. It is true that among its candidates ... we find a Mr. Feintuch-Szarski [a Jewish last name], but he is in the company of Bishop Teodorowicz, Father Lutosławski ... and others, so as to purposely demonstrate that even a Jew can be supported by Chjena [the hyena], ... provided that he can fulfill certain conditions, which make it possible for the Chjena to cover the high costs of electoral agitation, which is conducted, as we know, under the slogan ‘Down with the Jews!’ But since Mr. Feintuch-Szarski is a rich banker from Cracow and willing to pay... Long live Mr. Feintuch! Long live Chjena!⁵³

It is impossible to tell exactly who produced this pamphlet or precisely what their intentions were aside from, obviously, embarrassing the National Democratic movement. But it is extremely telling that while the flyer used the *phenomenon of anti-Semitism to attack ChZJN*, it did not attack anti-Semitism itself. It is almost certain that the authors of the fake pamphlet were not anti-Semites themselves, and that they were simply playing with the stereotype. Nevertheless, their decision illustrates a disturbing phenomenon—

“the Jews” were beginning to be used, even by the left, as a rhetorical device to discredit their political opponents. In other words, rather than fighting the racist premises of the right, the left was beginning to manipulate them for its own purposes.⁵⁴

The message of the powerful right-wing press was pitched at an only slightly higher intellectual level. According to the supposedly most ‘highbrow’ pro-ChJN daily *Gazeta Warszawska*, the goal of “the Germans and Jews” was to bring Poland to ruin by supporting leftist or center-left parties. As *Gazeta Warszawska* saw it:

The Germans and the Jews ... are doing their best to become the greatest possible power in the Sejm, so as to thwart pro-national policies, and extend the power of leftist or center-left governments, which are leading Poland to disaster. It is the duty of every Pole to thwart the Jewish-German victory!”⁵⁵

In other words, all “real Poles” had to vote for the ChZJN—opting for any other party would only “split the Polish vote” and thus play into the hands of the “enemies” of the nation. The article followed this up with a sophisticated calculus of how Jews “steal” Polish votes in various electoral scenarios, and how not voting for the National Democratic list would *always* have the effect of bringing “more Jews” into the *Sejm* and reducing the number of Poles, no matter which party one voted for and no matter what the balance of power was in the particular riding. But despite the sophisticated electoral math, the bottom line was simple: whenever a Pole voted for a non-ND candidate, he or she was splitting the “national vote,” “harming the nation” and allowing an “enemy” to be elected.

The argument, though rhetorically aimed at the Jews, was actually directed against the Polish leftist and centrist parties. Most specifically, the goal of the National Democrats was to stake a discursive monopoly on being Polish. Reading newspapers like *Gazeta Warszawska*, *Rzeczpospolita*, or *Dziennik Poznański*, not to mention the decidedly low brow *Gazeta Poranna*, one comes away with the impression that the election was being contested by only two camps—“the Poles,” meaning the nationalist right, and the “Jews,” meaning everyone else. And the only real message of the right press was to convince the Poles not to fall for any Jewish “deceptions” or “machinations,” which was what the Polish left and center really amounted to. Obviously it is extremely difficult to accurately measure the impact of this propaganda campaign on voters. But the message was simple, relentless, and aimed at emotions rather than the intellect. The Endeks clearly believed that the only idea capable of mobilizing is a crude idea. As I will argue, the elections of 1922 proved them correct in many respects.

Anti-Semitism was a staple of Endek street politics long before the elections. In fact, it is extremely rare to find any mention of a ZLN rally, demonstration, lecture, or any other event, in which attacking the Jews did not play a prominent part. A speech attacking the Jews was often delivered at the very beginning of a rally, presumably to elicit an emotional response in the listeners and “warm them up” for the more quotidian speeches that followed. For example at a rally of some 3,000 people held on September 21, 1921, the Warsaw ZLN activist Petrycki explained to the gathered crowd that Palestine could only support three million Jews, and not the five million who currently lived in Poland.⁵⁶ Therefore it is not surprising, Petrycki argued, that the remaining two million

would seek to create a “state within a state” in Poland itself. Unfortunately, he went on, “the government and society” did not understand this danger and were unable to fight it. With the crowd warmed up in this fashion, Głabiński, one of the national ZLN leaders, got up on the podium to give a less outlandish and explicitly political speech criticizing Piłsudski and his “clique” and demanding speedier elections. On the very same day, another rally began with a speech in which the Jews were blamed for the falling course of the Polish currency, which was followed by one denigrating Piłsudski as a “political fraudster.”⁵⁷

While the records left behind by police informants are not always detailed enough to allow me to fully substantiate this hypothesis, it seems likely that such an arrangement of the speeches was not accidental. It may very well have been that the anti-Semitic accounts of Jewish “frauds” and “conspiracies” against the Polish nation raised the emotional level of the audience, whose members were thus “primed” to interpret the actions of the government or even of the popular Piłsudski in a negative light.

The specific accusations leveled by ZLN speakers against the Jews cannot always be ascertained.⁵⁸ But the extant evidence seems to indicate that charges leveled against the Jews were both numerous and creative. Aside from “causing inflation” and “attempting to create a state within a state,” the Jews were also accused of “taking over” (*zazydzenie*) the economic life of particular regions, creating new political parties to break up Polish unity, supporting the schismatic Mariavite Church, trying to break up Poland, or being in league with the Freemasons.⁵⁹ But the most popular theme was the unity of the Jews and

socialists. “Down with socialism and Jewish stooges (*pachołki żydowskie*)!” was by far the most popular rallying cry heard at National Democratic demonstrations.

There were, however, times when the National Democrats’ obsession with the Jews temporarily subsided—usually when a pressing political exigency interfered. In July 1922, an important constitutional struggle broke out over the question of whether it was the *Sejm* or the Head of State (ie. Piłsudski), who had the prerogative to appoint the premier. During this period, National Democratic rallies expressed clear and concrete political demands—that Wojciech Korfanty be made premier and that the constitutional prerogatives of the Head of State be curtailed.⁶⁰ With such concrete goals occupying their minds, the NDs presumably had no need to enter diatribes about Jewish conspiracies. Yet, this is an exception which proves the rule that on the street level in Warsaw, the National Democrats had little more than anti-Semitism to offer their supporters.

The contrast with other parties is striking. For example, speakers from the center-right *Centrum Mieszczańskie* (Bourgeois Center) party vowed to improve the housing situation in the city, while those from Piłsudczyk National Civic Union promised a more technocratic government. The mass parties of the left and center-left championed social legislation, with the PPS focusing on working conditions, and both Piast and Liberation regularly discussing land reform in their electoral rallies.⁶¹ In the records left behind by the Warsaw branch of the political police, I have not come upon a *single* instance in which the National Democrats addressed a concrete social or political issue. Hatred of the

Jews, and to a somewhat lesser extent of the left and the Piłsudczyks, appeared to be the only focus of their street rallies.

The Electoral Rhetoric of the Patriotic Left

Whereas the nationalist right was united into a single voting bloc, the leftist and centrist parties contested the election separately. While they were divided over many issues, the PPS, *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe “Wyzwolenie”* (Polish Peasants’ Party Liberation), and *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe Piast* (Polish Peasants’ Party Piast) all saw themselves as representing the ‘left’ and being broadly supportive of Piłsudski.⁶² The same could also be said of the smaller *Narodowa Partia Robotnicza* (National Workers’ Party or NPR), which despite its name tended to support Piłsudski and voted together with the left on most issues. Moreover, aside from the general sympathy between the Piłsudczyks and the parties of the left, Piłsudski was widely acknowledged to have “his people” among party leaders, parliamentary deputies, and other party activists. Some of them were well known for their personal loyalty to Piłsudski (such as Hołówko in the PPS, Dąbski in Piast, or Miedziński in Liberation) but others could be seen as “sleepers.” Many of these people traced their loyalty to Piłsudski back to the revolutionary “heroic” days of the early 1900s and while for the most part they were loyal party activists, they could be counted to follow Piłsudski’s directives and to try to move the party as a whole in the direction set out by the Marshall.⁶³

Unlike the ChZJN, the parties of the left and center, even including the small and mildly nationalist National Workers' party, focused their respective campaigns on specific issues rather than symbolic identity politics. Obviously, some of these issues, such as land reform, carried an enormous symbolic load and could involve strong emotions including anger.

The rhetoric of the PPS has been studied extensively, and for the most part the party remained committed to articulating socialist slogans and economic demands focused on improving the workers' quality of life.⁶⁴ There is also little doubt the PPS was the best organized of the political machines contesting the election. It had a coherent ideology a clear organizational structure, and it commanded a disciplined and well-armed militia.⁶⁵ Its power to mobilize workers was considerable—on September 26, 1922 police sources reported that PPS mass rallies (*masówki*) were held at “almost every single factory” in Warsaw.⁶⁶ The PPS also engaged in “taking over” the meetings of other political parties (such as the Christian Democrats) and in harassing and breaking up Endek marches and rallies.⁶⁷

The Polish Peasants' Party Liberation was a unique and highly unusual political party. Although its membership was composed primarily of peasants, it was led by urban radicals, mostly followers of Piłsudski, from the Warsaw intelligentsia. As Adam Pragier writes, Wincenty Witos the leader of Piast was in his element only as a Polish peasant leader, whereas Stanisław Thugutt, the leader of “Liberation,” could be equally well at home among “French radicals, or British, Italian, or Belgian liberals.”⁶⁸In fact, the radical

intelligentsia leadership of the Liberation chafed some deputies, who believed that the party was steered by an unelected “mafia” of Piłsudczyks.⁶⁹ Socially, the party was liberal and was seen as “pro-Jewish” by its political enemies.⁷⁰

However, while the exact extent to which the Liberation may have been under the tacit control of Piłsudski’s entourage will probably never be known, the party’s style, discourse, and program were quite different from that of the Piłsudczyk parties proper (which will be discussed shortly). The “Liberation’s” key slogans were immediate and comprehensive land reform, universal education, anti-clericalism, and the call for local self-government. While the surviving electoral literature is very limited, it is clear that, like the PPS, the Liberation was engaged in the politics of interests rather than identities. For example, surviving Liberation flyers show a strong burly peasant smashing down a wall, which was being erected by three figures—a nobleman in traditional costume, a bourgeois city dweller, both of whom stood for the National Democrats and other right-wing parties, and the Piast leader Wincenty Witos.⁷¹ The caption reads: “The peasant breaks down the wall and goes towards his voting list #3 [Liberation], which will give him power, knowledge, and land.”

The realm of symbolic politics was not entirely absent from the political rhetoric of the Liberation or PPS. For example, the nobleman dressed in a traditional costume, who adorned many Liberation flyers and posters, was a quasi-mythical figure who by his very existence represented the oppression of peasants. Still, the difference between the rhetorical strategies of the NDs and of the left-wing parties was palpable. For the

Liberation, *issues*, even if as vaguely articulated as “power, knowledge, and land,” were more important than identities and enemies. The solution to Poland’s, and peasants’, problems was not to defeat someone but to uplift the peasants. Admittedly, this involved taking land from the large landowners. But the problem was access to land; not the landowners themselves.

Most importantly, land reform was a concrete proposal which could be implemented by a Liberation government. For the National Democrats, on the other hand, the Jews were *the* problem, which underpinned all the other shortcomings of Polish society. Drunkenness, high rents, inflation, prostitution, liberalism, atheism, were all the results of the single underlying problem—Jewish presence and influence in Poland. In fact, the National Democrats hardly ever mentioned concrete issues at all. The solution to *all* problems was to remove the Jews and “their stooges” from power, both direct (control of government) and indirect (supposed control of “society”). Everything else would immediately solve itself.

At any rate, despite having support from (and influence on) the parties of the left, particularly the Liberation and the PPS, the core of the Piłsudczyk movement did attempt to create its own electoral vehicles—the *Unia Narodowo-Państwowa* (UNP or National Civic Union) and the *Zjednoczenie Państwowe na Kresach* (ZPK or Civic Union of the Borderlands). Neither of these parties managed to win a single seat in the *Sejm* and both ceased to function almost immediately after the election. Not surprisingly, they have been almost entirely ignored by the historiography, especially since they left historians

virtually no primary sources to work with.⁷² Nonetheless, the two parties should not be dismissed and understanding their origins, as well as their ultimate failure, is important in any attempt to trace the struggle over the meaning of the “imagined community” of Poland.

The two parties are also interesting because, to a much greater extent than either the Liberation or the PPS, they attempted to actively and explicitly put forth an alternate discourse of the nation and counter the National Democrats’ attempts to appropriate the latter. The UNP, in particular, had considerable support among the Piłsudczyks and, more broadly speaking, Poland’s liberal elite. It was supported by influential newspapers, such as *Kurjer Polski* and *Kurjer Poranny*, as well as the Piłsudczyk publications, *Droga* and *Głos Prawdy*. It included members of the former Club of Constitutional Work (*Klub Pracy Konstytucyjnej*), a group of moderate conservatives, many of them of Jewish background, who entered the 1919 parliament due to having been deputies in the Austrian *Reichstag* and played the role of influential fixers.⁷³ Equally interesting is the fact that among the members of UNP there was a large number of people who, while relatively unknown at the time, “would go on to constitute the very pinnacle of [Piłsudski’s] *Sanacja* regime” after the coup d’état of 1926.⁷⁴ One of the chief backroom figures in the creation of the UNP was Gabriel Narutowicz, although he himself contested the election as a member of the ZPK.⁷⁵

What program did these future rulers of Poland attempt to present to the voters? In the first place, it may be surprising to note that, according to secret police reports,

UNP speakers were regularly able to draw thousands of supporters into the streets. Moreover, speakers from the UNP attempted to draw a clear distinction between themselves and other pro-Piłsudski groups, such as Liberation and PPS.⁷⁶ While the latter focused on radical economic reforms, UNP counseled moderation and “national unity,” though as we will see this term meant something quite different than it did for the National Democrats. According to *Głos Prawdy*, UNP sought to give a voice to the middle classes and intelligentsia and “free” these groups from Endek hegemony.⁷⁷ Indeed, it appears that the UNP was envisioned as being partly complementary to the two mass parties, and electoral competition between them was carried out in a friendly spirit.⁷⁸

As its name indicated, the UNP was explicitly dedicated to working for a civic national identity. But, in keeping with its Piłsudczyk origins, it also sought unity and strength. To quote *Głos Prawdy*, the party’s goal was to:

... group together all those elements, especially among the intelligentsia, which are capable building the state and treating all events from the perspective of state, rather than partisan, interests. Under this banner, we find many different ideological elements. The radical democrat stands next to the enlightened conservative. ... Maybe these people will end up going in different directions once the state is consolidated. But today they must walk together since the state is in need.⁷⁹

Clearly, the main theme of the UNP was national solidarity in the context of a state building project. Józef Lewandowski, a communist historian unsympathetic to the Piłsudczyk project, writes that the “only” real difference between the National Democrats and the UNP, was the latter’s liberal attitude towards the national minorities.⁸⁰ Yet what to Lewandowski appeared to be merely a different policy was, in fact, a fundamental disagreement regarding the nature of the imagined community of the Polish nation.

Indeed, UNP leaders imagined a Polish nation which was entirely open to those who wished to join it. And these were not simply empty declarations scribbled away in elite journals with limited circulation; UNP activists were willing to take this message “to the streets.” Speeches delivered at UNP rallies forcefully condemned the politics of divisiveness, “beastliness,” and hatred, which, they claimed the National Democrats were engaging in.⁸¹ Unlike their PPS or Liberation counterparts, UNP politicians openly addressed the dreaded “Jewish question” at mass rallies, and repudiated anti-Semitism more openly and forcefully than the Polish left ever would again, not only in their program but “on the street.” For instance, the UNP speaker Julian Machlejd was attacked by the right-wing press for his supposedly pro-Jewish speech delivered at an UNP meeting. The offending remarks apparently consisted of the assertion that if the Jews are treated well by the state they will become loyal citizens.⁸² Like the PPS, the UNP also ran a number of acculturated Jews as its candidates.

The most important speeches on the subject of national identity were delivered by the UNP’s leading Warsaw candidates, Stanisław Bukowiecki and Jan Kucharzewski, on the fortnight of the election.⁸³ Kucharzewski argued that under the Partitions, the Poles accumulated “a large reservoir of hatred, mistrust, and bitterness,” which had to be immediately “liquidated” instead of being directed “against the sons of our nation and the citizens of our own state.”⁸⁴ Kucharzewski’s language is interesting—like Skwarczyński and other Piłsudczyk writers, he draws a clear distinction between “the sons of our nation” and the “citizens of our state.” The two groups were clearly not coterminous; Kucharzewski’s patriotism was not civic in the conventional understanding of the latter

term. Even though the “citizens of our state” admirably deserved the same respect and protection as the “sons of our nation,” Kucharzewski’s distinction between these two groups highlights the problematic and unstable nature of liberal or civic conceptions of the nation in Poland. It is also worth noting that Kucharzewski did not address the Jews by name, even though his listeners would not have had any doubts as to who he was talking about. As we will see, this kind of roundabout condemnation of anti-Semitism will become ever more popular among the Polish left following the Narutowicz assassination.

Bukowiecki, on the other hand, had no problems addressing the subject by name, not only in his high-brow publications which were analyzed in the previous chapter but also in political speeches in front of thousands of supporters. His argument, made in a speech in front of some 3000 people at the UNP’s final rally in Warsaw, is so interesting (and contradictory) that it is worth quoting at length:

The Polish nation must be understood as a civic nation (*naród państwowy*), in the same way in which the Western states understand this term. ... We must pull [the national minorities] into the orbit of national life to make sure that they become a component of Polish life, that they play an active part in it, and that they have the same obligations as Poles. This is fully compatible with respect for their language, culture, and so on, as long as we respect those differences and allow these people to live their life as they understand it. ... The state cannot stand on the foundation of a never-ending internal conflict. This would deplete the strength of our nation, render our entire social life problematic and destroy us morally. This internal battle with the Jews is the gravest of dangers. The Polish nation cannot afford it.⁸⁵

Clearly, even as Bukowiecki argued for the creation of a civic Polish nation, he used a culturally (rather than civically) defined conception of the national community in his speech. Obviously, the “Polish nation” which could not afford the battle with “the Jews”

did not (or at least not yet) include the latter. According to Bukowiecki, the goal of Polish policy was full assimilation (albeit without any coercion) but until then it was clear that he did not consider the Jews to be Poles.

My intention in pointing out this contradiction is not to disparage or belittle Bukowiecki and the UPN, who were not alone in struggling between civic and cultural conceptions of the nation. Indeed, Zionist politicians, such as Hartglass, Thon, or Grünbaum found themselves in the exact same predicament. On the one hand, they demanded to be included into the Polish nation, but on the other they wanted to maintain a separate *national* Jewish identity based on ethnicity.⁸⁶ While these contradictions do not invalidate the projects which created them, they do illustrate the highly unstable nature of liberal and “civic” conceptions of the nation. This instability, which is probably inherent in civic nationalism, would prove to be increasingly problematic for the latter’s proponents.

It is also noteworthy to compare the complexity of Bukowiecki’s thought and of his understanding of “national unity,” with the simple, or even simplistic, message of “national unity,” understood as hatred of the Jews, which was proposed by the National Democrats. The UPN’s vision of the Polish nation required complex historical and conceptual explanations. These were always complicated, often convoluted, and could appear, as in this case, to be contradictory. The community imagined by the Endeks, on the other hand, was starkly simple and required no explanation. As we will see the simple slogan of “Down with the Jews!” could be enough to mobilize its supporters.

The second Piłsudczyk outfit which contested the 1922 elections was the *Zjednoczenie Państwowe na Kresach* (ZPK or Civic Union of the Borderlands). Its program and its social base were quite similar to the UNP. If anything the ZPK stressed its allegiance to Piłsudski even more forcefully than the latter. Its flyers emphasized this allegiance and promised land reform, universal education, economic reconstruction, and equal rights for all nationalities.⁸⁷ Among its candidates were radical Warsaw Piłsudczyks such as Franciszek Paschalski, independent liberals, like Narutowicz, as well as some Ukrainian and Belarusian representatives.⁸⁸

In their public utterances, ZPK candidates stressed the problems caused by National Democratic ethnic nationalism for the Polish national movement. Discrimination based on ethnicity, according to Franciszek Paschalski was detrimental to the creation of a “strong Poland,” which was the ultimate goal of the ZPK, just as it was for the UNP and the Piłsudczyk movement as a whole. Progressive economic reforms and liberal treatment of the minorities went hand in hand in the achievement of this goal. As Paschalski explained in an interview with a *Kurjer Poranny* journalist:

We also [like the National Democrats] want a strong Poland. But the way to achieve this goal is not by attacking the minorities. Land reform, if correctly carried out, will bind the Ukrainian peasant to the state and [at the same time] increase the Polish element in the Kresy.⁸⁹

Despite many high profile candidates and a close association with Piłsudski, the UNP and ZPK ended up in dismal failure, getting 38,159 and 48,442 votes respectively.⁹⁰ The Polish right trounced them among the middle class, the left beat them among

workers and peasants, and the Bloc of National Minorities destroyed their dream of appealing to the Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews. Indeed, as Hołowko pointed out, Narutowicz and the ZPK were beaten primarily by the Bloc. Thus, the Piłsudczyks' conception of a civic nation was rejected not only by the Poles but by the minorities as well.⁹¹ The failure of the Piłsudczyk parties can be attributed to a number of factors. Perhaps the most important factor was the organizational weakness and shallow roots of both parties and the resultant failure to adequately mobilize what resources may have been available to them. Both parties entered the electoral game at the last possible moment and without adequate preparations at the grass roots level. They lacked established channels for mobilizing support, such as churches for the National Democrats or factory workers' councils for the PPS. While the UNP commanded a dedicated base of supporters in Warsaw, there is no doubt that the PPS and the National Democrats had infinitely better organized and 'deeper' organizations, and displayed greater activity.

But another factor which may help us understand the two parties' failure was their very message. All other parties offered ready solutions to Poland's social and economic problems. These were quite different, and often absurd, but they at least claimed to be *solutions*. In National Democratic discourse, the removal of Jewish political and economic influence from Polish national life would solve, in an almost miraculous fashion, the vast majority of the country's political and economic problems. Thus, the anger of disaffected Poles found a ready outlet. The peasant parties promised land reform as the panacea to rural voters' troubles. For the PPS, the solution was socialism and progressive social legislation.

The UNP and ZPK, on the other hand, called for laborious state building, civic inclusiveness, solidarity, intelligentsia leadership in political life, and eschewing opportunism and demagogy in politics. According to Piłsudczyk writers, no one else was able to articulate such a program “because they feared losing support among the masses.”⁹² The two parties’ lack of fear appears to be a large part of the reason for the failure. In keeping with the ethos of the Legions and the Polish Military Organization, where so many of them got their start, the Piłsudczyks, and Polish liberals more broadly, were ultimately elitists who refused to pander to the masses. Despite their democratic rhetoric, they had no taste for “right-wing chauvinism” or “left-wing demagogy,” and believed that just as the National Democrats had no monopoly on the nation, so the mass based parties of left had no monopoly on “progress, radicalism, or liberalism.”⁹³ Even at political rallies they adopted professorial tones and lectured about the necessity of technocratic government or the complex historical causes of Jewish poverty in Poland.⁹⁴ The UPN’s flyers too lacked the demagogic slogans of either the left or the right. On the “nationalities question,” they had the following to offer:

The Polish state is made up of 2/3 Poles and 1/3 national minorities. ... The Polish nation must be understood as a political nation. Our state is made up of a number of nationalities. With regards to these groups, we should aim to bring them into the orbit of national life, so that they feel that the Polish state is their state, and that they have the same duties with regards to the state as the Poles.⁹⁵

Such learned diatribes offered no solutions, let alone simple ones, for the problems faced by most Poles.

Hence we arrive back at the great paradox of Piłsudczyk political thought discussed in the previous chapter. The Piłsudczyks were elitist democrats, who believed that they could “guide” society through their own “labor” or example, without the need to resort to (what they believed to be) the demagogy of nationalist or classist rhetoric. This alone should explain their failure at the ballot box in the era of mass politics. However, failure at the ballot box did not mean their quest for power had been abandoned. As Józef Lewandowski writes, “the influence of the UNP activists was much greater than their popularity in society.”⁹⁶ Indeed, as we will shortly see, one of the key activists and organizers of both the UNP and the ZPK would soon become the President of the Republic.

A surprising and entirely new electoral coalition, which would play a decisive role in the presidential elections, was constituted by The National Minorities’ Bloc. The Bloc was, in many ways, a reaction to the Polish electoral law designed by the National Democratic deputy Father Lutosławski precisely to frustrate the minorities. The law, which allowed only parties that won elections in at least 6 electoral districts to receive additional deputies (in numbers equivalent to their percentage of the vote) from the “state list,” was explicitly designed to diminish the number of minority deputies in the *Sejm*.⁹⁷ By combining their votes into a single voting list, the disparate minority groups could not only make use of the D’Hondt system (which favored larger parties) but also receive additional seats from the nationwide list.

The Bloc, then, was a marriage of necessity between ideologically diverse groups. As the Polish socialist Adam Pragier put it, the Zionist leader of Bloc, Yitzhak Grünbaum found himself to be a coordinator of “Prussian *Junkers* from Pomerania, Belarusian half-Bolsheviks, Ukrainian nationalists, and [pre- or non-national] “locals” from the Polesie region.”⁹⁸ The Bloc combined most Jewish, Ukrainian, Belarusian and German groups, with some exceptions especially among the Ukrainians and Jews.⁹⁹ The Polish reaction to the Bloc, which was almost entirely negative even among the left, will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to note the Bloc’s very existence was a response to the National Democrats’ machinations of the electoral system and, no doubt, to their rhetoric of hatred which targeted all the minorities and forced them to band together against the perception of the common threat of Polish nationalism.¹⁰⁰

Discourse, Anger, and Electoral Politics

Violence, including political violence, was a regular component of Polish life in the early 1920s. Some parties, especially the PPS, cultivated semi-professional militias, regularly armed not only with clubs but also with handguns. The latter, if police informants are to be trusted, were imported “in the thousands” by the party’s Warsaw organization.¹⁰¹ The NDs, on the other hand, seemed to rely primarily on less formally organized high school and university students, many of them members of the anti-Semitic *Rozwój* organization and student fraternities (*korporacje*). In clashes between

these two groups, PPS members usually packed more punch than their numbers would indicate.¹⁰²

Yet, while the 1922 election was not immune from violence between the National Democrats and their enemies (especially the PPS and UNP in urban settings, and Liberation and Piast in the countryside), this violence paled in comparison to what would take place after the elections.¹⁰³ It is also interesting while National Democratic electoral agitation was directed primarily at the Jews, violent attacks on Jews during the pre-election period were rarely noted either by the papers or by the secret police. This would be a stark contrast to the period immediately following the elections. Finally, the violence that did occur most frequently took place between parties competing for the same vote. Thus, clashes between communists and socialists were reported in numerous factories and were more frequent than those between the PPS and National Democrats. UNP supporters, competing for the same middle class and intelligentsia votes, occasionally engaged in fights with the National Democrats.¹⁰⁴ And while there is almost no mention of physical attacks on Jews by the National Democrats and their supporters, either in the press or in the secret polices files, there are numerous reports of violent clashes *between* rival Jewish groups.¹⁰⁵ In general, the pre-election period was seen as calm.¹⁰⁶ But as we will see, immediately after the elections, the violence assumed both a new intensity and new targets.

In this chapter I have presented the argument that National Democratic discourse at the “street level” was in fact reduced to one simple message—hatred of the Jews.

Moreover, contrary to what most Polish historians of the movement usually claim, there was very little that could be described as “moderate” about the Endek anti-Semitism of the early 1920s. In the 1922 parliamentary elections, National Democratic flyers, electoral rallies, and newspapers blamed the Jews for absolutely everything that was wrong in Poland.

The specific manner in which the rhetorical construction of “the Jews” was deployed by National Democratic politicians and publicists is most interesting, and has not generally been acknowledged by the scholarship. In the first place, the obsession with the “Jewish Question” can be interpreted primarily as an exercise in channeling anger. Early independent Poland was a place where the old anger regime, under which the Partitioning Powers could be blamed for the majority of society’s ills, had collapsed. The NDs’ relentless portrayal of the Jews as the culprits for all of society’s ills, offered the Poles a plausible “explanation of what was wrong” with their country, a personal and clearly identifiable target for their anger, as well as a simple remedy—reduce “Jewish influence” and everything would get better.

By rhetorically linking the Jews to the parties of the left, the National Democrats were also able to present themselves as the only authentic representatives of “Polishness.” In Endek rhetoric anyone who didn’t vote for the ChZJN was effectively working to undermine the Polish cause and aiding the Jews. The fact that most of the physical violence perpetrated by the National Democrats in the pre-election period was directed at fellow Polish parties rather than the supposed root of all evil, the Jews themselves, makes

it clear that this strategy was used cynically and instrumentally for electoral purposes. However, as we shall see the demonization of the Jews, the portrayal of the left as “Jewish stooges,” and the rhetorical exclusion of anyone but the National Democrats themselves from the imagined community of the Polish nation would soon result in much more extensive violence directed both at the Jews and anyone deemed to be associated with them.

Seen from Ost’s perspective of “anger management,” the Polish left adopted a very different strategy. The electoral rhetoric of the mass based parties of the left was rather narrowly focused on socioeconomic issues relevant to the latter’s supporters, such as land reform and social legislation. Perhaps more interesting is the rhetoric deployed by the two Piłsudczyk parties. While weak organization and the use of resources certainly played their part, the ZPK and UNP failed to build on Piłsudski’s immense personal popularity at least in part because of their inability to offer a compelling narrative capable of explaining and mobilizing Polish voters’ anger. In their longwinded, nuanced, and complicated speeches, articles, and books, Piłsudczyks and liberal fellow travelers waxed about the need for the Poles to “build a civic nation” or for “hard labor” for the Fatherland. But they utterly failed to offer either a simple explanation of what was wrong with the country or a meaningful target for popular anger. Their rhetoric simply lacked both the clarity and the conviction of that of the leftist parties, let alone the National Democrats. As we will see, this fact would play a decisive role in the days immediately following the parliamentary elections.

¹ Examples of this sort of work include: Grott, *Nacjonalizm Chrześcijański*; Jedlicki, *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują*; Maj, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy*; Mich, *Obcy W Polskim Domu*; Modras, “The Interwar Polish Catholic Press on the Jewish Question”; Sobczak, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej*; Wapiński, *Narodowa Demokracja, 1893-1939*; Wapiński, *Świadomość polityczna w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*; Wątor, *Działalność Związku Ludowo-Narodowego w latach 1919-1922*.

² Andrzej Ajnenkiel, *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*, vol. 2 (Warszawa: PWN, 1989), 15–19.

³ According to Rataj, the victory of the radical left-wing “Liberation” Polish Peasants’ Party in his own district was greatly facilitated by a series of posters produced by the local National Democrats. The posters depicted a devil, marked with the number 2 (the number of the “Liberation” voting list), attacking the Virgin Mary with a pitchfork. It then exhorted the voters to elect the National Democratic candidate in order to protect religious values. However, according to Rataj, the peasants in his district interpreted the poster as saying that the National Democratic candidate was in league with the devil and refused to vote for him, which greatly contributed to Rataj’s own victory. In general, the peasants voted more on the basis of “personal trust” in an individual candidate than party programs. “The only issue which animated rural voters,” he wrote, “was the question of land reform.” Constitutional questions played almost no role in the election. Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 30.

⁴ Ajnenkiel, *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*, 2:24.

⁵ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 230.

⁶ Janusz Faryś, *Piłsudski i Piłsudczycy: Z dziejów koncepcji polityczno ustrojowej* (Szczecin: Uniwersytet Szczeciński, 1991), 32–33. Ajnenkiel, *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*, 2:55.

⁷ Szymon Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Sejmowe, 2004), 126.

⁸ See paragraph 113 of the constitution. Both the left and the right believed that they would augment their power in the forthcoming elections. Thus, the intention of both parties was to leave the interpretation deliberately open ended, and for subsequent governments to have greater freedom of maneuver.

⁹ The D’Hondt system is used in Poland, as well as a number of other states, today.

¹⁰ Ajnenkiel, *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*, 2:71.

¹¹ Ajnenkiel, *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*, 2:80.

¹² Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej*, 128–9.

¹³ *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*, 2:71.

¹⁴ David Ost, “Politics as the Mobilization of Anger,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no. 2 (May 1, 2004): 230.

¹⁵ Ost, “Politics as the Mobilization of Anger,” 238.

¹⁶ David Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005), 25.

¹⁷ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 127. See Chapter 9.

¹⁸ Although they imbue the term with different meanings, both Anderson and Gellner explain the rise of nationalism in terms of the advent of modernity and the

passing of traditional society. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.

¹⁹ Kieniewicz, *Historia Polski 1795-1918*, 277.

²⁰ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 22.

²¹ Jedlicki, *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują*.

²² See Wróbel, "The Seeds of Violence: The Brutalization of an East European Region, 1917-1921"; Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej*.

²³ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 44.

²⁴ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 44. Rataj recounts a personal story in which he ran into his former acquaintance awaiting a military tribunal. The man, a journalist and writer of historical fiction, was caught along with his school-aged son plundering a noble estate outside of L'viv. Such incidents were commonplace. Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 48.

²⁵ "Turniej wyborczy," *Kurjer Polski*, October 30, 1922.

²⁶ This point was made by all Polish political forces, including the socialists and Piłsudczyks. For example, "Myśl państwowa," 515.

²⁷ Resource Mobilization Theory emerged in the 1970s in the discipline of sociology through the works of scholars like Charles Tilly, but is also extraordinarily influential in contemporary Political Science.

²⁸ Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity*, 25.

²⁹ For a history of the ZLN as a political party, see Maj, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy*.

³⁰ Maj, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy*, 30-31. The change of brand was not entirely to the liking of many orthodox Endeks, including Dmowski himself. Kozicki, *Pamiętnik*, 489.

³¹ Kozicki, *Pamiętnik*, 489. The same process took of a Galician "takeover" took place in many political parties. For example, Ignacy Daszyński used his experience in the Austrian *Reichstag* to lead the PPS, despite the party's base being in the industrial areas of central Poland.

³² Jakubowska, Urszula, "Publicystka Narodowej Demokracji wobec Józefa Piłsudskiego w okresie międzywojennym," in *Piłsudski na łamach i w opiniach prasy polskiej 1918-1989*, ed. by Kossewska, Elżbieta and Jabłonwski, Marek (Warszawa: Aspra, 2005), 91.

³³ Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland*, 67.

³⁴ Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland*, 83.

³⁵ Maj, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy*, 52.

³⁶ For a detailed discussion *Rozwój* see Szymon Rudnicki, "Towarzystwo Rozwoju Handlu Przemysłu i Rzemiosła," in *Gospodarka, ludzie, władza: Studia historyczne*, ed. by Antoni Mączak and Michał Kopczyński (Warsaw: Krupski i S-ka, 1998), 316-33.

³⁷ On the street level *Rozwój* and ZLN worked hand in hand, so as to be almost indistinguishable. For example see Archiwum Akt Nowych, *Komisariat Rządu na Miasto Stołeczne Warszawę* (KRMSW) 297/IV, t. 1, k. 185.

³⁸ Parties were often known by the numbers which one circled in order to vote for them. Thus, the PPS was dubbed *dwujka* (Number Two) and *Piast jedyńka* (Number One).

³⁹ Thus Andrzej Chojnowski writes: “On the Jewish Question, the utterances of key Endek publicists [in the 1920s] were far removed from later extremism. They mostly pointed out the economic consequences of the occupational structure of the Jewish population, as well as the national character of this group and its international ties.” Andrzej Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów polskich w latach 1921-1939* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1979), 19. Similar arguments are advanced in Domagalska, *Antysemityzm dla inteligencji?*, 44; Wapiński, *Świadomość polityczna w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, 424.

⁴⁰ Ajnenkiel, *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*, 2:84.

⁴¹ The flyers, which are available at the Archiwum Akt Nowych, constitute a valuable and underutilized source for understanding Endek strategy and discourse. Archiwum Akt Nowych, *Zbiór Druków Ulotnych* (ZDU), t. 127.

⁴² See Chapter 3.

⁴³ ZDU 127/9.

⁴⁴ ZDU 127/20.

⁴⁵ ZDU 127/27.

⁴⁶ ZDU 127/14. Perl, a universally respected PPS leader, handily won his seat and represented the PPS in the *Sejm* until his death. He had also been a very close personal friend of Piłsudski (the latter left his testament with Perl during his riskiest military adventure). Lejb (or Leib as it would be transliterated into English) was the Yiddish diminutive of Trotsky’s first name, while Sobelson was the real family name of the Polish-Jewish Communist activist Karol Radek.

⁴⁷ Herman Diamand, like Perl, was an acculturated Jewish Pole who occupied a prominent position in the PPS through the 1920s. ZDU 127/7.

⁴⁸ ZDU 127/38.

⁴⁹ ZDU 127/38.

⁵⁰ ZDU 127/8.

⁵¹ ZDU 127/6. For a similar example see 127/22.

⁵² Even when the Jews were not mentioned directly, it was implied that they would be the ones benefitting from the “Polish” vote being split. ZDU 127/12, 15, 51.

⁵³ ZDU 127/56.

⁵⁴ This strategy would be fully embraced by the left following the election and murder of Narutowicz. See Chapter 10.

⁵⁵ “Mniejszości narodowe a wybory,” *Gazeta Warszawska* October 30, 1922.

⁵⁶ KRMSW 297 IV t.1/185. In reality of course interwar Poland was inhabited by just over three million Jews.

⁵⁷ KRMSW 297 IV t.1/185.

⁵⁸ Often police informants merely note a speech “attacking” or “criticizing the Jews” was made, without providing further specifics.

⁵⁹ KRMSW 297 IV t 3/268, 288; KRMSW 297 IV t4/458, 464. *Zażydzanie* was used as a verb or adjective (*zażydzony*) and could be roughly translated as to “to be made Jewish” or “to be overrun by Jews.” This particularly nasty term was a staple of National Democratic speeches, newspapers, and electoral literature.

⁶⁰ See KRMSW 297 IV, t4/363-370.

⁶¹ KRMSW 297 IV t4/468, 501.

⁶² “O co idzie?” *Piast*, September 17, 1922. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 606 note 40a.

⁶³ Adam Pragier who is generally unfavorable to Piłsudski’s writes: “Piłsudski’s ‘own people’ were tied to him primarily through past conspiratorial work, or through more recent activity in the Legions or in politics. They were unconditionally loyal and obedient to him. In their respective parliamentary clubs, they often occupied influential positions, which they gained through their own work. But there was also a number of promising youths who advanced surprisingly quickly in their clubs and moved—with [the Piłsudczyks’] discreet support—to the front rank. Their ties were not immediately obvious. But in important moments they all moved in the same direction.” Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 230–231.

⁶⁴ Holzer, *PPS: Szkic dziejów*; Kazimierz Więch, *PPS w Pierwszych Latach Parlamentaryzmu 1921-1923* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1987).

⁶⁵ The militia will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

⁶⁶ KRMSW 297 IV t4/448.

⁶⁷ KRMSW 297 IV t4/493.

⁶⁸ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 229.

⁶⁹ Maciej Rataj, initially elected as a “Liberation” deputy, offers the following recollection of his first meeting with the party: “I was struck by the paternalistic tone which [unelected ‘bigshots’] assumed when dealing with elected deputies and the transparent desire to steer the parliamentary club from behind the scenes by some organization or mafia which, as I found later, turned out to be the [Piłsudczyk] Polish Military Organization. I was upset and turned off by this from the very first moment. ... It was becoming ever clearer to me that “Liberation” was a mafia and not a party with a concrete program. The proof was given by the first meeting of the parliamentary club ... in which non-deputies spoke, voted, and steered things their own way.” Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 36. Rataj eventually engineered a short-lived marriage between “Liberation” and *Piast*, and remained in the latter party when the union failed. According to Witos, the Liberation consisted of young and uneducated peasants led by “Warsaw freemasons.” Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 16.

⁷⁰ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 17.

⁷¹ Biblioteka Narodowa, *Druki Życia Społecznego* (DŻS), “Władza Ustawodawcza 1922,” sygn. Iac6.

⁷² Józef Lewandowski, “Unia Narodowo-Państwowa,” in *Z dziejów wojny i polityki: Księga pamiątkowa ku uczczeniu 70-ej rocznicy urodzin Prof. Dra. Janusza Wolińskiego* (Warszawa: WAP, 1964), 40.

⁷³ As Bernard Singer writes, the Club of Constitutional Work deputies were “the masters of ceremonies during the creation of governments, the negotiation of important international treaties, and the difficult conflicts [in the *Sejm*]. ... They were the most important deputies in the *Sejm*, and even though there were only 18 of them, they had more influence than a club of 30-40 people. Bernard Singer, “Kapeki,” *Nasz Przegląd*,

April 29, 1929 quoted in Bernard Singer, *Od Witosza do Ślawka* (Warszawa: Verum, 1990), 26.

⁷⁴ Lewandowski, "Unia Narodowo-Państwowa," 41.

⁷⁵ Lewandowski, "Unia Narodowo-Państwowa," 40.

⁷⁶ For example see "Dla orientacji wyborców," *Kurjer Poranny*, November 5, 1922.

⁷⁷ "Unja Narodowo-Państwowa," *Głos Prawdy*, April 15, 1922, 310.

⁷⁸ When a PPS speaker took the podium at a UNP rally shortly before the election, he was not booed or attacked, which would have been the standard practice at the time. Rather he entered into debate with one of the UNP speakers; the listeners merely gave the latter a "huge ovation" in order to show their support. "Do Urny," *Kurjer Poranny*, November 4, 1922.

⁷⁹ "O centrum państwowe," *Głos Prawdy*, September 23, 1922, 546.

⁸⁰ Lewandowski, "Unia Narodowo-Państwowa," 43.

⁸¹ "Wiec Unji NP," *Kurjer Polski*, November 3, 1922.

⁸² "Sprostowanie fałszów," *Kurjer Polski* October 31, 1922.

⁸³ This was the same Kucharzewski who was the Concentration's candidate for the 1912 Duma elections.

⁸⁴ "Przemówienie Jana Kucharzewskiego na wiecu Unji Narodowo-Państwowej w dniu 2 listopada 1922 r" *Kurjer Polski*, November 5, 1922.

⁸⁵ "Przemówienie St. Bukowieckiego na wiecu Unji Narodowo-Państwowej w dniu 2 listopada 1922 r."

⁸⁶ Just like the Polish advocates of the "civic" nation, the Zionists were obviously inconsistent in their rhetoric. For example, Grünbaum claimed that the word "Polish" should always be used only in a civic (*państwowy*) rather than ethnic sense and, therefore, Jews were to be treated as Poles. But this did not stop him from using the word "Jewish" in an explicitly ethnic sense. Thus, while he denied Poles the right to see themselves as an ethnic nation, he actively encouraged the Jews to think of themselves as one. SSSU no. 267, December 2, 1921, 50-51.

⁸⁷ DŹS "Władza Ustawodawcza 1922," sygn. Iac6.

⁸⁸ Wróbel, "The Seeds of Violence: The Brutalization of an East European Region, 1917-1921."

⁸⁹ "Rozmowa z adw. Franciszkiem Paschalskim," *Kurjer Poranny*, October 19, 1922.

⁹⁰ Tadeusz Rzepecki, *Sejm i Senat 1922-1927: Podręcznik dla wyborców zawierający wyniki wyborów w powiatach, okręgach, województwach* (Poznań: Wielkopolska Księg. Nakł. K. Rzepeckiego, 1923), 514, 518.

⁹¹ Tadeusz Hołówko, *Prezydent Gabriel Narutowicz: Życie i działalność* (Warszawa: E. Wende, 1924), 139.

⁹² T. Zagórski, "Przed oddaniem głosu," *Głos Prawdy*, November 4, 1922, 629.

⁹³ Zagórski, "Przed oddaniem głosu," 630.

⁹⁴ KRMSW 297 IV, t4/501. "Przemówienie St. Bukowieckiego na wiecu Unji Narodowo-Państwowej w dniu 2 listopada 1922 r."

⁹⁵ DŹS "Władza Ustawodawcza 1922," sygn. Iac6

⁹⁶ Lewandowski, "Unia Narodowo-Państwowa," 45.

⁹⁷ Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej*, 128–129.

⁹⁸ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 228.

⁹⁹ Among Ukrainians, East Galicians boycotted the elections, while the relatively pro-Polish Small Agrarians' Party, popularly known as *Chliboroby* contested the elections independently, and introduced 5 deputies into the *Sejm*. Among Jews, the Bund, Folkists, and Left-Zionists, contested the elections independently, almost entirely without success, the sole exception being the election of a Folkist deputy from Warsaw.

¹⁰⁰ Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie II Rzeczypospolitej*, 228–231.

¹⁰¹ KRMSW 297 IV, t4/370.

¹⁰² KRMSW 297 IV, t4/370.

¹⁰³ This is not to say that such violence did not occur or that when it did, it was not serious. On the eve before Senate elections a car carrying National Democratic agitators was fire-bombed and shot at by unknown individuals, probably members of PPS *bojówki*. KRMSW 297 IV, t4/524.

¹⁰⁴ KRMSW, 297 IV, t4/493.

¹⁰⁵ KRMSW 297 IV, t4/474, 485, 501. In particular, the police reported fights between the Zionists and Bundists, Zionists and Folkists, as well as between Bundists and (Jewish) Communists.

¹⁰⁶ Zagórski, "Przed oddaniem głosu," 629.

CHAPTER VII

Contingency and Discourse: The Presidential Election of 1922

The election of Narutowicz to the presidency, and the resulting head-on clash between competing conceptions of 'Polishness' cannot be understood without reference to the institutional constraints of Polish democracy and the specific results of the 1922 parliamentary election, as well as the interplay between these contingent factors and the discourse of hatred articulated by the National Democrats over the preceding years. To understand this point, it is necessary to examine the election results more closely.

Most importantly, it was extremely difficult to tell who had actually *won* the election. Between them, the parties of the left (PPS, Liberation, NPR, and a number of smaller parties) had won some 32% of popular vote. With Piast, still pro-Piłsudski at this point, this number went up to 47%. If one counted only the votes cast for Polish parties (and excluded the national minorities) the combination of the left and Piast received a whopping 60% of the vote. However, under the D'Hondt voting system, which favored large parties, this apparent victory translated into a mere 39% of the parliamentary seats. The three parties of the right, which managed put together a single voting bloc (the ChZJN), benefitted from the D'Hondt electoral calculus.¹ With 31% of the popular vote,

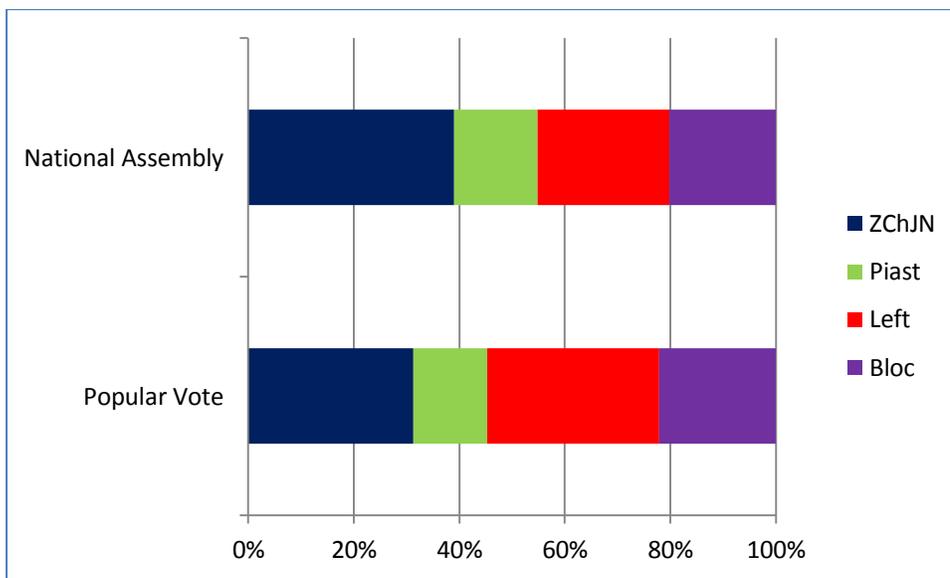
the ChZJN was able to claim 39% of the seats in parliament—the very same amount as the left and Piast had achieved with 47% of the popular vote!

These results created a parliament which was split almost exactly down the middle between the centre-left and the right. It also allowed both sides to claim victory. The ChJN, with its 216 deputies and senators, could claim to be the largest group in parliament and the true victor. The second best represented Polish party, the Piast, had only 70 deputies and 17 senators. Moreover, despite being split into three parties, the ChJN was the most cohesive group in parliament. The left and centrist parties were wracked by antagonisms between peasants and workers and, to a lesser extent, a personal clash between Piast leader Wincenty Witos and the leadership of “Liberation.” Thus, the ChJN could at least hope to win the cooperation of some of the parties from the centre. On the other hand, the left could plausibly claim to have won the popular vote. While the Piłsudczyk *Głos Prawdy* mourned the defeat of the Civic National Union, it took solace in the fact that 61% of “Poles,” and an even greater proportion of “Polish citizens,” voted “for Piłsudski” and against the ChJN.²

Still, according to the parliamentary math, the result was a tie, with both the left and the right controlling some 39% of the seats in the two houses. The remaining 22% of the seats in the *Sejm* and Senate (and some 21% of the popular vote) were won by the Bloc of National Minorities. It may be tempting to think of the Bloc as a natural ally of the Polish left. Indeed, a combination of the Bloc and the centre-left parties was the most obvious way in which a stable ruling majority could have been formed in the *Sejm*. And to

someone uninitiated in Polish politics, such a coalition may have appeared to be an obvious choice. But it was not the only choice which existed. The other possibility was for the right to rule, providing it could win the cooperation of Piast, the most conservative of the centre-left parties.

Figure VII.1 1922 Parliamentary Elections Results and Popular vote³



The first big test of which of these two possible coalitions would coalesce was provided by the presidential elections which, according to the constitution, were to be carried out by the combination of the two houses of parliament. Taken together, the *Sejm* and Senate would constitute the National Assembly (*Zgromadzenie Narodowe*). With the presidential election not scheduled until December 9, 1922, all interested parties had a

full month to prepare their candidates and choose coalition partners—and to make their case in the court of public opinion.

The highly inconclusive parliamentary election results acted to reinforce the National Democratic obsession with the Jews. Furthermore, the split National Assembly, especially when combined with the poorly consolidated nature of Polish political parties, created a highly unstable and unpredictable situation. As the parties jockeyed for position and alliances, informal groups within the parties themselves often acted on their own initiative and with their own purposes. Ideological commitments, historical prejudices, backroom deals, and personal animosities all intertwined in a manner no social scientist could have foreseen. As we will see, an unpredictable series of contingent events resulted in the election of an entirely unexpected and unknown president. More importantly, these contingent factors provoked the most decisive and forceful debate over the meaning of the Polish nation ever to take place in the interwar Republic.

The Doctrine of the Polish Majority

As the largest and most cohesive group in the *Sejm*, the ChZJN could plausibly see itself as the victor of the parliamentary elections. Yet, it could not rule alone. And because of its aggressive electoral tactics, it had largely deprived itself of potential allies. It was absolutely unthinkable that “Liberation,” PPS, the smaller leftist parties, or the Bloc would side with it. Support of the National Workers’ Party was unlikely and, in any case, would not have been enough for a majority. The only option was Piast.

There were a number of reasons why such an alliance might be possible. Although the party advocated land reform and had supported Piłsudski, Piast was seen as expressing the social conservatism of many Polish peasants. It also had little sympathy for the social radicalism of Liberation or the socialist demands of the PPS. The interests of urban workers, which the latter represented, were often at odds with those of the peasants. Finally, Wincenty Witos, its formidable and charismatic leader, was known as a pragmatist and even something of an opportunist. It was widely believed that he would be willing to cooperate with either the left or the right, depending on what his party would get from the deal.

The right began to court Piast almost immediately after the elections. In the new parliaments' first session, it helped the latter's candidate, Maciej Rataj, become the Marshal (or speaker) of the *Sejm*. In return, Piast dutifully supported the National Democratic candidate, Wojciech Trąpczyński for Marshal of the Senate. The right-wing press greeted this development as a sign that a Piast-ND coalition was slowly coalescing.⁴ But since there was to be only one president, this kind of horse trading agreement would not work with regards to the presidency. And several important factors prompted Piast to resist too close a collaboration with the National Democrats. Most importantly, while socially conservative, Piast demanded land reform and the breaking up of large estates in order to give land to smallholding peasants. The National Democrats, funded largely by landowners, opposed plans for land reform and coming up with any compromise on the issue would not be easy. Another obstacle was the bad blood left over from the elections. When Piast attempted to make inroads among peasants in the National Democratic

dominated province of Poznania, the Endeks responded with terror and violence. Piast rallies and meetings were routinely attacked by mobs of Endek supporters (often led by priests), and during one visit to the province Witos himself was hit in the head with a rock.⁵ Finally, there is little doubt that in 1922 Piast considered itself a part of the left.⁶

Therefore, in addition to any carrots which they could dangle in front of Piast, the NDs also needed a stick. Fortunately, from their perspective, the perfect stick was readily available. We will recall from the previous chapter that the dominant Endek narrative depicted Polish political and national life as being threatened by the Jews and their proxies or “stooges.” Now, in the specific political context created by the election, wherein the left and Piast could not rule without the support of the Minorities’ Bloc, this narrative appeared to be gaining coherence. In fact the outcome of the election looked like it had been scripted to play right into the Endek myth of a planned Jewish takeover of Poland! By pre-emptively attacking any cooperation with the Bloc as treasonous participation in the Jewish plot to destroy the nation, the National Democrats could prevent Piast and perhaps even the rest of the Polish left from seeking an alliance with the minorities and, thus, from ever attaining a stable ruling majority. The threat of being labeled as “Jewish stooges” could therefore help bully Piast deputies into coming to terms with the right.

While rabid anti-Semitism and rhetoric emphasizing the “Jewish threat” to the nation had been integral components of National Democratic discourse during the parliamentary elections, and indeed since 1905, in the period following the elections they assumed an entirely new dimension. And with good reason—the only way the National

Democrats could hope to win the presidency, and more importantly rule Poland, was by scaring the other parties, and particularly Piast, away from cooperating with the Bloc. Attacking the Jews now became a means to a *very* concrete political end—the presidency. As we have seen from Chapter III, a very similar political calculus could be used to understand the National Democrats’ anti-Semitic campaign during the Duma elections of 1912.⁷

The new tone and urgency were first evident in the National Democratic press. Four days after the Senate elections, in an article tellingly entitled “Us and Them” the mass market *Gazeta Poranna* wrote the following:

The Jews have changed remarkably since the elections. ... The Jews discuss the future government and politics with such liberty and certitude, as if Poland was already their cabal courtyard, where everything must take place according to Jewish will. ... All their hopes rest upon this unassailable base—the belief that that the left will never allow the [National Democrats] to govern, and that the left will be able to govern Poland only jointly with the Jews. ... In the new *Sejm* they want to begin a transformation of Poland from a national state into a state into a multinational Judeo-Poland. They are arrogant and pushy. They easily turn themselves into internationalists, progressives, neutrals, without ever ceasing to be Jews. We have known this for a long time. But will even a single party have the courage to rule Poland jointly with—the Jews?⁸

Even though, in reality the Jews constituted only 40% of the Bloc’s deputies, with the remainder being divided between Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Germans, in an article entitled “The Great Jewish Offensive,” *Gazeta Poranna* sought to demonstrate that the Bloc was in fact a Jewish creation designed to “declare war” on Poland.⁹ The goal of this war was to take over the government and, again, turn the country into a “Judeo-Poland.” Other articles listed the old litany of supposed Jewish transgressions against the Polish

nation, from controlling the foreign press to spreading pornography “so as to undermine the spirit of the nation.”¹⁰ But there was always a new element—the threat to take over the machinery of government with aid of the Polish left.

The more high-brow and (supposedly) intellectual weekly *Myśl Narodowa* pitched its argument at a slightly higher level. According to Father Kazimierz Lutosławski, a prominent ZLN politician and the key author of the constitution, the elections were a victory for “Polish nationalism” because they made “the entire nation feel the substance of the fundamental question of our time: to make Poland a national state.”¹¹ In other words, Lutosławski claimed, the strong showing of the Bloc would lead to the rise of anti-Semitism and this would in itself be a victory for the right! He also added that Witos would be afraid to cast his lot with the socialists and Jews and predicted the formation of coalition government between Piast and the ChJN.¹²

Not surprisingly, spurred by the right-wing press, both political and popular manifestations of anti-Semitism began to pick up markedly immediately after the elections. The tone of the National Democratic political rallies changed markedly. While Endek speakers during the election campaign dealt in vague and unspecified threats of Jewish and Masonic conspiracies, the latter now became starkly concrete. The new “danger,” as an Endek speaker explained at a ZLN rally of some three thousand people a few days after the election, was the Minorities’ Bloc and its attempts to subvert Polish politics.¹³

It is equally telling that a massive anti-Semitic campaign by Polish university students was not part of the parliamentary election, but began almost immediately upon the latter's conclusion. On November 24, 1922 a meeting of students from the University of Warsaw "unanimously" passed two resolutions: the first called for a "social boycott" of Jewish students, and included such provisions as not shaking Jews' hands and not talking to Jews. The second demand was to institute *numerus clausus* in Polish universities. The meeting was marked by speeches by the prominent National Democrat Stroński and Christian Democrat Chaciński.¹⁴

Following the meeting, some 5,000 students marched to the Ministry of Education to present their demand for the institution of *numerus clausus*, chanting "Down with the Jews!" "Long live *numerus clausus*!" and singing patriotic hymns.¹⁵ Indeed, while the "social boycott" of the Jews was easy enough to implement (at least for hardened anti-Semites), the demand for *numerus clausus* gave rise to a massive campaign which mobilized thousands and, conveniently, brought the "Jewish question" to the centre of national politics.

The campaign soon led to violence against Jewish students.¹⁶ And it became a *cause célèbre* for right-wing newspapers and politicians, at both the national and local levels. Local National Democratic (ZLN) structures issued petitions supporting the "righteous demands" of the students.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the National Democratic press supported the campaign with articles bearing titles like "A Healthy Instinct among the Youth."¹⁸ According to *Gazeta Poranna*, the student rallies "offered indisputable proof

that Polish society is waking up and beginning to realize the Jewish danger in Poland.”¹⁹

According to Zionist politicians, the students’ anti-Semitic “transgressions” had the support of certain organs of the Polish administration.²⁰ It is impossible to ascertain whether or not this was the case, but it is beyond doubt that they had the open support of the National Democratic parties and press.

Indeed, in the run-up to the presidential elections, the rhetoric of hatred put forth by the right-wing press intensified markedly. On December 3, a week before the elections, in an article entitled “The Last Battle for Independence,” Father Lutosławski argued that the Jews were a “fourth partitioning power” and that Poland was still a “slave to the Jews.”²¹ “Down with the Jews,” he continued, “must become our sacred rallying cry.” Admittedly, Lutosławski claimed to discourage pogroms and violence which, “aside from being morally abhorrent,” were politically “counterproductive” and helped Jews tarnish Poland’s image abroad.²² The main point, however, was that “we,” ie. the Poles, would not tolerate “any discussions with the Jews” aside from figuring out how to speed up their exodus from Poland.²³ The emphasis on “discussions” is important and there is no doubt that it referred to the political talks which the Bloc was hoping to start with the parties of the left. Endek politicians and journalists beat this message home relentlessly. Official communiqués of the ChZJN warned that Polish society “will turn its back on those who choose to work with the Jews.”²⁴ According to *Gazeta Warszawska* the Polish masses would never allow the Jews “to direct the state.”²⁵

In the intensifying atmosphere of hatred stirred up by the right-wing press and taken up by National Democratic student organizations with the blessings of senior right-wing politicians, a new rhetoric was emerging. Specifically, the somewhat vague National Democratic slogan of “national unity” was very quickly being reworked into what became known as the “Doctrine of the Polish Majority.” This doctrine was perhaps most succinctly explained in an article published in *Gazeta Warszawska* as early as November 15, and it was henceforth repeated explicitly and implicitly in virtually all right-wing publications. Here is how *Gazeta Warszawska* understood the fundamental issue at stake in the presidential elections:

We write about this today—when no one can yet predict upon whom the Nation will bestow the presidency. And for this reason we must make one forceful objection: the [the presidency] belongs, and can only belong, to the one chosen by the Nation [ie. ethnic Poles], because according to the constitution supreme power in Poland belongs to the Nation and the president is but an organ of the Nation in the domain of supreme power. Let no one imagine that anyone but the Polish Nation itself has the constitutional power to bestow the presidency: No artificial majority, created against the Polish majority with the aid of the enemies of the nation [ie. the minorities] shall wield power in the state. Reality based upon the wishes of the Nation would quickly smash to bits such dangerous delusions.²⁶

In other words, the doctrine of “Polish Majority” amounted to the explicit exclusion of all people defined by the NDs as “non-Polish” from *any* political role in the state. And by this rhetorical sleight of hand, any governing coalition that *included* the minorities could be dubbed as “non-Polish” in its entirety. In fact, if the right succeeded in persuading the electorate that cooperation with the Jews amounted to treason, it

would find itself in a win-win situation. “We couldn’t wish for anything better,” wrote a *Gazeta Warszawska* journalist gleefully.²⁷ If the left refused to work with the Jews, the right would get to form the government. But if the left did opt to work with the minorities, it “would have to accept the responsibility for this decision” in the court of public opinion. Given the public’s expected reaction, the article concluded, “we have nothing to complain about — we may even wish our opponents success.”²⁸

In sum, anyone cooperating with the minorities’ Bloc was thereby a “Jewish stooge.” According to Lutosławski, this applied even to Piłsudski himself, who could become president “only through the Jews and their stooges.” But perhaps this was not surprising since, according to Lutosławski, Piłsudski “not since yesterday has been a tool of international Jewry in its war against the Polish nation.”²⁹ And while Lutosławski was more radical than some other National Democratic leaders, most notably Grabski and Głąbiński, he was not a loony, at least by the standards of his party. He was a mainstream, articulate, popular, and influential ZLN politician, and one of the main architects of the Polish constitution.

Clearly, the Doctrine of the Polish Majority had a very practical political purpose. It was extremely unlikely that any of the Polish parties, with the exception of Piast, whose political program, aside from the commitment to land reform, was rather nebulous, would want to join the ChZJN in a coalition government. Yet, it seemed that Piast’s more natural place, precisely because of its emphasis on land reform, was on the left. The Doctrine of the Polish Majority, therefore was intended as a cudgel against Piast, than any

other party, and was aimed to frighten the peasant deputies into rejecting any overtures from the left and the national minorities.

The pressure brought to bear on Piast, and personally on its leader Wincenty Witos, by the right was substantial. According to the nationalist press, Witos “held the key to resolving the current political crisis.”³⁰ However, by the time of the presidential elections he would have to decide whether or not to “burn his bridges” not only with the right’s parliamentary deputies, but with “national public opinion as a whole.”³¹ If Piast chose to cast its lot with the Bloc, the National Democrats argued, Polish society would come to see the peasant party as Jewish stooges and traitors to the Polish nation. This message was relentlessly beaten home in all the right-wing newspapers and brought to bear on individual Piast deputies.³²

The imagery associated with the attacks on Piast leader Wincenty Witos was particularly interesting. In one cartoon in *Gazeta Poranna*, Witos was portrayed as the archetypal Polish peasant, sitting at a crossroads struggling to figure out which way to go.

Figure VII.2 1922 “The Temptation of Witos”³³



According to the sign, one road led to “Poland,” the other to “Bolshevik Land.” The Zionist leader, Yitzhak Grünbaum, was portrayed as the devil, whispering into Witos’ ear, presumably promising him power (in coalition with the Minorities’ Bloc), and urging him upon the path to Communism.³⁴ Interestingly, a Prussian soldier (the National Democrats’ traditional enemy) could also be seen hiding in “Bolshevik Land,” waiting eagerly for Witos’ decision and presumably ready to reveal himself once the latter walked away from the national cause.³⁵

The image played on stereotypes deeply embedded in Polish culture. Peasants were perhaps well meaning but also naive and suspect to manipulation by the crafty, devious, devilish Jews. The choice now facing their leader was a binary one. There was only one legitimate way to “Poland.” Any alliance with the left and the national minorities would be interpreted as a betrayal of the nation to the devilish Jews (and Communists

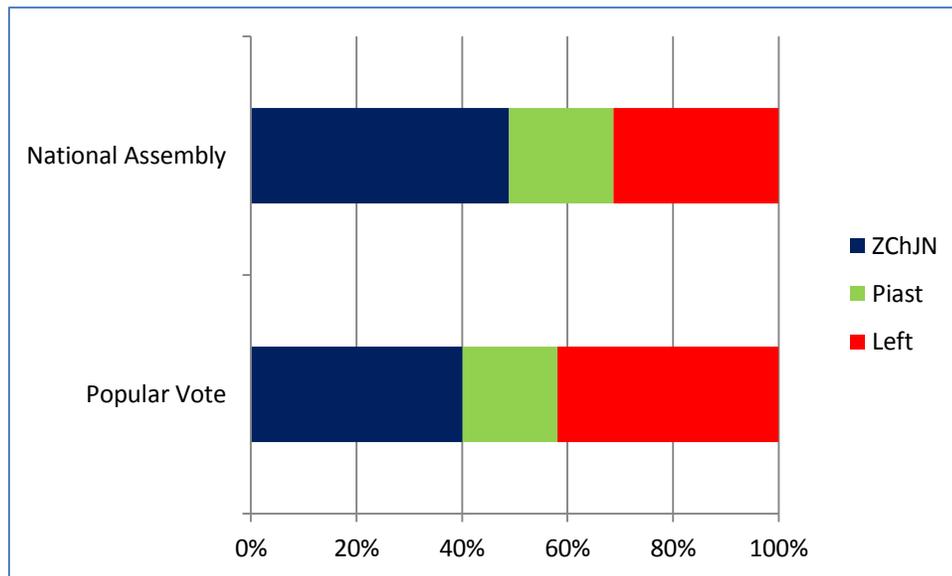
and Germans). Conveniently, the only way for Piast to reach Poland was to follow the lead of the National Democrats and join them as a junior coalition partner. While the effects of images like the one discussed above are not possible to measure quantitatively, there is no doubt that they resonated deeply with many Poles, especially those who already believed that the Jews were attempting to control Poland. As we will see, the rhetorical and emotive power of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority would continue long after the specific institutional context which produced it had lost its importance.

But the notion that only a ChZJN-Piast coalition expressed the wishes of the “Polish majority” was based on a number of highly dubious premises and some outright falsehoods. Most obviously, it was predicated on the rejection of the claims of some 35% of the Polish state’s citizens to any sort of “Polishness.” Loyalty to Poland meant nothing; ethnicity meant everything. In practice, “the battle for the Polish majority” as the right-wing press quickly dubbed the presidential election, amount to an orchestrated campaign of hatred against the Jews, and to a lesser degree the Germans and Ukrainians, and those political parties which showed any willingness to cooperate with them.

Less obviously, an analysis of the popular vote reveals that a centre-left coalition actually had the support of the majority of “ethnic” Poles, as these were defined by the National Democrats themselves, and that the left was underrepresented in parliament due to the particularities of the electoral system. In fact, based on an analysis of the popular vote, a center left coalition would have had the support of some 61% of ethnic Poles, significantly more than the National Democratic 39%. Even a National

Democratic-Piast coalition, which could only come about through Piast's surrender to the National Democratic blackmail, would only have 59% of the ethnic Polish voters behind it.

Figure VII.3 1922 Parliamentary Election Results and Popular Vote without the Bloc³⁶



Therefore, the Endek position was highly inconsistent. On the one hand, the NDs rejected the constitutional provision that the majority of deputies in the National Assembly had the right to rule as “artificial” and not representative of the “Polish nation.” But on the other, they chose to accept the equally legalistic and even more artificial allocation of seats in the *Sejm* and Senate, which clearly did not reflect the preferences of the majority of ethnic Polish voters.

Finally, the National Democrats' obsession with the Bloc as a Jewish political party was also misplaced. To be sure, the Jews were the largest group in the Bloc, but they constituted no more than 40% of its deputies, the rest being made up of Ukrainians, Germans, Belarusians, and a small number of Russians.³⁷

But despite these obvious theoretical inconsistencies, and the glaring fact that the majority of "ethnic" Poles supported the centrist and leftist parties, subsequent events would show that the discourse of the "Polish majority" carried an immense power to mobilize. Indeed, the effectiveness of the discourse of the Polish majority illustrates the proposition, apocryphally attributed to Lenin, that a lie told often enough becomes the truth. The left would continue to point out that it had the majority of the Poles behind it. But, as we will see, its rhetoric was more complicated. It lacked catchy slogans, was based on an appeal to reason rather than emotions, and was not driven home with the same relentlessness and intensity.

While the previous Endek call for "national unity" was rather vague and gained what coherence it had only in the face of an equally vague "Jewish threat," the Doctrine of the Polish Majority rendered this threat starkly concrete. Specifically, it came to be *embodied* by the materializing alliance between the National Minorities Bloc and the Endeks' other opponents in the National Assembly. By explicitly linking their (general) anti-Semitic paranoia to a very specific political event (the emergence of an anti-ND coalition involving the Bloc), the Endeks effectively set up a tripwire, the transgression of

which would be immediately discernible to their followers. Thus, the trigger for violence was set in place and ready to be pulled.

The Defense of the Civic Nation

Since it was clear that the National Democrats would never be able to work with the Bloc of National Minorities, one might assume that the left could be assured of the Bloc's support. As such, we may surmise, it had for all practical purposes won the election. In fact, however, the situation was more complicated. Indeed, the entire spectrum of left and centre-left parties, from the PPS to Piast, was dismayed by the Bloc's success. Most importantly, even before the elections, the very existence of the Bloc was widely perceived as a manifestation of nationalist and anti-Polish sentiments among the minorities. Its creation was seen as the minorities' reaction to National Democratic attacks, but two wrongs did not necessarily make a right. As *Głos Prawdy* wrote, the Bloc had to be seen in the context of the "incessant barking of Polish, Ukrainian, Jewish, and German nationalists."³⁸ The real battle in Polish politics was between the "camp of democracy," and the "swamp of chauvinism" – and in this battle the Bloc was unmistakably in the latter camp.³⁹

The matter was also aggravated by personal politics and specifically Yitzhak Grünbaum's impetuous and highly abrasive political style.⁴⁰ Grünbaum had positioned himself, and the Jews, at the centre of the Bloc and assumed a highly prominent role as its organizer and spokesman. In doing so, he probably succeed in making the Bloc even less

popular than it would have been otherwise.⁴¹ Finally, as the PPS-daily *Robotnik* pointed out, there was no real community of interests between the Bloc and the Polish left, since the overwhelming majority of the Bloc's deputies "had nothing whatsoever to do with democracy, social progress, or the left." *Robotnik* went on to argue that Grünbaum's General Zionists were "the instrument of the Jewish bourgeoisie, and [as such] just as radically nationalistic and intolerant as the most radical National Democrats."⁴² While there was obviously a good dose of hyperbole in this claim, it was true that the Bloc and the left had almost little in common ideologically.

In fact, the left almost universally doubted the Bloc's social progressivism.

Przyjaciel Ludu (The Friend of the People), a radical peasant newspaper, predicted that based on past actions the Jews, Germans and Ukrainians will doubtless use their influence in the *Sejm* to the detriment of the state. More importantly, the paper expressed the following prognosis:

We can now forget about the peasants' idea of land reform. In this regard, the lordly-clerical deputies [National Democrats] will easily reach an understanding with the Jews and Germans Similarly, in all tax matters Polish and Jewish capitalists will easily come to an understanding, so as to put the entire burden of running the state on the peasants' backs.⁴³

Superficially, it may be possible to say that the Polish left and the Bloc both subscribed to a "civic" view of the nation. In reality, however, their respective views on the question of nationality and citizenship were very different. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Polish parties were prepared to give territorial autonomy to eastern regions and civic equality to all citizens regardless of ethnicity, religion, etc. In this respect, their nationalism (or patriotism) is perhaps comparable to the American vision of the nation.

But they were emphatically opposed to any notion of personal autonomy for the Jews or Germans. The Zionists, on the other hand, who were largely responsible for organizing the Bloc, can only be described as a nationalist movement in that they demanded the official recognition of Jews as a nationality, with corporate communal rights and personal autonomy. No Polish party or movement was prepared to accept these demands.

Still, these important considerations aside, there is little doubt that an unspoken factor behind the left's decidedly cool attitude towards the Bloc was the doctrine of the "Polish majority," which was being formulated by the National Democrats. Too close an association with the Bloc could perhaps be politically damaging. Indeed, the National Democrats clearly took delight in the left's "dilemma." According to *Gazeta Warszawska*, "even the biggest enemies of 'Endek nationalism'" were "not sure if they should accept the presidency from Jewish hands."⁴⁴

But despite having little love for the Bloc, and for Grünbaum in particular, there is no doubt that prior to the presidential elections Poland's left-wing press consistently upheld the right of national minorities to participate as fully fledged partners in the democratic process. The moderate conservative *Kurjer Polski* lamented the "inexplicable tendency" of the National Democrats to attack the Bloc by claiming that "every move" made by the national minority deputies "must be harmful towards Poland," and went on to point out that Gladstone frequently made use of Irish votes in pursuing his agenda in Parliament. If a powerful and "civilized" nation like Britain could utilize the votes of its

minorities constructively, then surely Poland could do the same.⁴⁵ The article went on to offer the following image of the Polish nation:

Every individual... must be led to that great camp whose slogan is the strength and good of the state without regard for difference of language, [where all] can find protection under the buckler of the state, within their boundaries, specified by law.⁴⁶

The socialist organ, *Robotnik*, went further in pointing out the absurdity of the National Democratic position:

Statistics tell us that almost 1/3 of the people of Poland are not Polish. ... Therefore, it is a fact that the Polish Republic is not a state of only one nation. ... "The Hyena" [ChJN] proclaims: minorities do exist, they have 88 deputies in the Sejm, but we should act as if neither the minorities nor their deputies existed. Don't acknowledge them! Or rather acknowledge them but only so as to engage them in constant battle. The voices of the minorities must not count, neither in the choice of the President of the Republic nor of the government!⁴⁷

The article then went on to attack the National Democrats' demands for *numerus clausus*, blamed Polish nationalist intolerance for the fact the Jews were currently "reinforcing their sense of national separateness," and argued that National Democratic anti-Semitism was modeled on Tsarist Russia. It concluded by noting that the Polish state would be "terribly weakened" if the "the Polish nation was unable to deal with the question of national minorities."⁴⁸

At the same time, many left-wing publicists felt compelled to *acknowledge* the doctrine of the "Polish majority," even while giving primacy to other considerations. On November 18, *Robotnik* wrote:

The Hyena's [ChJN's] desperate cries that the Sejm and the senate have no moral right to... take the national minorities into account when choosing the Head of State ... are laughable in the face of statistics. From a constitutional and civic point of view such nationalistic arguments, which are a poor disguise for ... partisan reactionary interests, are inadmissible. However, in light of the election results among Polish society, they are a totally unsubstantiated conceit ... because the Polish nation gave the majority of its votes ... to parties of the left.⁴⁹

The Piłsudczyk *Głos Prawdy* also distinguished between the Polish votes, 61% of which were cast for the left-wing parties, and those of the minorities. It made this point “so that no one would later say that Piłsudski [who at this stage was universally assumed to be the left’s candidate for the presidency] owes his election to the Germans and Jews.”⁵⁰ Nonetheless, it quickly added, the latter was also “legal voters,” whose votes had every right to be counted.

The fact that even the NDs’ most committed enemies felt the need to *also* present their argument in terms of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority (even as they disavowed it!) illustrates the instability of the “civic” or liberal conception of the nation and the rhetorical power of National Democratic discourse. Despite this, it is fair to say that even after the *Sejm* elections the left forcefully defended a multiethnic or civic vision of the Polish state and the right of the minorities to participate as full partners in Polish politics, even or precisely as *national* minorities.

The Accidental President

Despite the considerable length of time which elapsed between the conclusion of the parliamentary vote and the presidential elections, which were scheduled for December 9, the latter caught the parties of the centre and left totally unprepared. The reason for this was Piłsudski's decision, made public only on December 4, not to run. In retrospect, Piłsudski's decision should have been anticipated—the constitutional prerogatives of the president had been stripped away by the National Democratic authors of the constitution precisely to make the office unattractive for Piłsudski. Nevertheless, leaders of the major left-wing parties believed until the very end that he might be persuaded to run, and it was only the public and categorical rejection of this idea by Piłsudski, less than a week before the elections, which forced them to consider possible substitutes.⁵¹

This was no easy task. Piłsudski was probably the only person readily acceptable to the entire spectrum of centre-left parties. Moreover, Piłsudski's popularity and charisma would render the role played by national minorities in his elections relatively less important. While, the National Democrats were not beyond calling the Marshall a "tool of the Jews," voting for Piłsudski, even in the company of the minorities, would have a decidedly different flavor than voting for a less popular candidate against the wishes of the self-appointed "Polish majority". Finally, Piłsudski's own instructions to his followers made the task of choosing a suitable candidate even more complicated. In his farewell speech, Piłsudski outlined the qualities he believed his successor would need to possess.

According to the Marshall, the new president would have to be a “man of compromise” and not too closely affiliated with any party.⁵²

It obviously would have made to sense for the left to agree on a joint candidate. Indeed, the PPS and NPR immediately agreed to support any candidate agreed on by the two peasant parties, Piast and Liberation. But such an agreement proved exceedingly difficult, due to a legacy of bad blood between the two. Liberation wanted the left to elect a common candidate but, since Piast’s Maciej Rataj, had already been elected Speaker of the *Sejm*, it forcefully resisted that idea that this candidate be closely affiliated with Piast. Liberation’s leader, Stanisław Thugutt, rejected the candidacy of the former socialist current cooperative movement leader Stanisław Wojciechowski, despite Piłsudski’s endorsement, because of his association with Piast. He also rejected “out of hand,” the idea suggested by Jan Fryze, the influential editor of the *Kurjer Poranny*, that Witos become president while Thugutt himself get the post of Premier.⁵³

While there is no conclusive evidence of this, it appears that Witos, a politician of considerable talent and ambition, wanted the presidency for himself and was willing to cooperate with either the left or the right to this end.⁵⁴ At the very least, he seemed to be hedging his bets, and allowed his party to negotiate with the National Democrats. But while Witos may have been willing to have the National Democrats help *him* to the presidency, he rejected their continuous barrage of entreaties and threats and refused to support any of *their* candidates. Thus, even as the National Democrats produced ever new “moderate” candidates, hoping that one of them would find Piast’s support, the wily

Witos kept demurring and waited, in all likelihood, for his own candidacy to be raised.⁵⁵ His spokesmen kept all options open.⁵⁶ Who would blink first? The brinkmanship continued until the very eve of the election.

Kurjer Warszawski described the scene at parliament on the evening of December 8 in the following words:

On the fortnight of the presidential election, despite the holiday, the parliament was buzzing with political activity. From the early hours of the morning until late at night, the presidiums of all the parliamentary clubs were in session without any breaks, conferences between clubs took place, and in the backrooms we saw animation not seen even in the most heated moments of crisis in the old *Sejm*.⁵⁷

Piast, Liberation, PPS, and their junior partner NPR held one more joint conference on the morning of December 9, with only hours to go before the election. The PPS evidently hoped to persuade the two peasant parties to agree on a common candidate, but to no avail.⁵⁸ In a spectacular display of either brinkmanship or incompetence, or perhaps a mixture of the two, the official candidates of the three left-wing parties were announced with only minutes to go before the election.

One of the most bizarre features of these discussions was that no one thought of including the Bloc of Minorities in the decision making process. While there is no doubt that important and legitimate differences separated the Polish left from the minorities, the fact that the left did not as much as consult the Bloc on tactical questions or invite its members to *any* shared deliberations is a testament to the power of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority and the fear of how the perception of working with the Jews might be interpreted by the Polish public. As Bernard Singer, the parliamentary correspondent of

the Jewish *Nasz Przegląd*, writes “the deputies of the Bloc dreamed of only one thing: getting close to the left, and making contact with the PPS, Liberation, and so on.”⁵⁹ And yet the call never came. Stanisław Thugutt informed the Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Jews as to who would be his party’s candidate no more than few minutes before the vote, asking for their support and not providing any further details. While the Ukrainians and Belarusians immediately promised their support, the Jews raised a number of objections. But there was no time to discuss them—the bell signifying the start of the National Assembly’ session was “already ringing” and both Thugutt and his Jewish interlocutors had to run to take their seats.⁶⁰ This was more or less the extent of the cooperation between the Polish left and the minorities prior to the vote.

On the morning of December 9, 1922, when the National Assembly convened to elect the first President of the Republic of Poland, the deputies were presented with five alternatives. The National Democrats opted for Count Maurycy Zamoyski, then Polish ambassador to France. The candidacy of Zamoyski, unveiled on the morning of the election, was a last minute change of plans—as late as the previous night the NDs were still rumored to be putting forth Wojciech Trąpczyński as their candidate. Trąpczyński was dropped only when the National Democrats realized that there was no chance of anyone but themselves voting for him. Zamoyski, it was hoped, would be different. Though a National Democrat, he was considered an amicable “man of compromise” and had friendly personal relations with Piłsudski and a number of his followers. Ironically enough Gabriel Narutowicz saw Zamoyski as a possible compromise candidate, amenable both to the Piłsudczyks and the right.⁶¹

It therefore appears that the last minute replacement was intended to win over Piast. However, in what can only be attributed to a gross failure of political foresight, the National Democrats neglected to take into account the fact that, however moderate he may have been, Zamoyski also happened to be the largest individual landowner in Poland. At a time when land reform and the parcellization of great estates were the most burning questions for all the peasant parties, this probably disqualified him as a presidential candidate.⁶²

Piast put forth the candidacy of Stanisław Wojciechowski. Wojciechowski, a socialist and close friend of Piłsudski in the early 1900s, had distanced himself from politics, renounced socialism, and was engaged in the peasant cooperative movement. During World War I he had worked closely with a number of National Democratic politicians and, like Zamoyski, was seen as a compromise candidate. Liberation, in turn, put forward the candidacy of Gabriel Narutowicz, a world famous professor of engineering, who returned to Poland after decades of emigration in Switzerland to run the Ministry of Public Works, and later the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Narutowicz was an ardent follower of Piłsudski, and a key backroom architect of the UNP. While he was influential in political backrooms and held in high esteem by those who came in touch with him, he was virtually unknown to the general public.

Despite Narutowicz's ideas being more in line with those of Piłsudski, it was Wojciechowski who had the latter's support. There were a number of reasons for this. First, Wojciechowski's adventure with socialism was long over, and he was perceived as

being only slightly to the left of centre and a “man of compromise.” He was tolerable to the left, had the backing of Piast, and had successfully cooperated with the National Democrats in the past. He had also been a close friend of Piłsudski and had no party affiliation or political base of his own from. According to some, Piłsudski believed that he would be able to control him from behind the scenes.⁶³ Narutowicz, on the other hand, had shown fierce independence of judgment on particular issues, even in the face of personal pressure from Piłsudski.⁶⁴ In fact, there is evidence that Piłsudski attempted to exert pressure through “his people” in both the PPS and Liberation in order to prevent the candidacy of Narutowicz from ever coming into being. In this case, Thugutt, generally a loyal Piłsudczyk, stuck to his guns.⁶⁵

The Bloc of Minorities, spurned by the left, put forth its own candidate, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, a renowned professor of linguistics and a political maverick, who had no chance of being elected.⁶⁶ The same was true of Ignacy Daszyński, the candidate of the PPS and the party’s leader. Upon Daszyński’s inevitable defeat, the PPS was ready to follow Piłsudski’s directives and vote for Wojciechowski.⁶⁷

As outlined by the constitution, the election would be an exceedingly complicated affair. If no candidate received an absolute majority, another identical vote would be held. If the second vote failed to produce a result, the candidate with the lowest number of votes would be removed from the list, and a third vote would be held. The voting would continue in this manner until one candidate reached an absolute majority of the votes.

The voting pattern is of critical importance, because the particular manner in which the votes were split later worked to strengthen the Doctrine of the Polish Majority.

As noon approached, the parliamentary clubs frantically prepared their formal candidacies. In the press gallery, journalists placed bets on who would be elected, with Wojciechowski and Narutowicz being the favorites.⁶⁸ The diplomats' gallery was nearly full. Through the window, one could see groups of onlookers huddled outside the *Sejm* to await the results. On the floor, the conditions were chaotic. Since the *Sejm* and Senate had never before met together, the room was overcrowded and, despite some extra chairs having been hastily brought into the building, there was a shortage of seating space.⁶⁹ The voting procedure, in which each vote took over an hour and was followed by a thirty minute break during which hurried huddles and ad hoc conferences were held, "stretched the deputies' nerves to their very limits."⁷⁰

In the first vote, predictably, the parties all voted for their own candidates. But the nervous atmosphere only intensified.⁷¹ During the break, in the backrooms and the cafeteria, rumors spread. According to some, the wily Christian Democrat Wojciech Korfanty managed to convince a portion of the right-wing deputies to vote for De Courtenay—so that the runoff vote could be held between Zamoyski and the minorities' candidate.⁷²

In the second vote, PPS abandoned Daszyński for Wojciechowski, thereby following Piłsudski's will, while the Bloc abandoned De Courtenay for Narutowicz. It seems, however, that a number of German deputies backed the National Democratic

candidate.⁷³ At any rate, while the Bloc deputies knew almost nothing about Narutowicz, they distrusted Wojciechowski because of the latter's willingness to engage in talks with the right. Daszyński was eliminated, while De Courtenay held on with ten votes.⁷⁴ After the third vote, De Courtenay was eliminated. The right steadfastly voted for their man Zamoyski.

At this point it should have become clear to everyone that the combined votes of Liberation and the Bloc would trump those of Piast and the PPS, and that Narutowicz would make it into the final round to face off against Zamoyski, thanks to the votes of the minorities. Realizing this, Grünbaum, whose deputies were already being threatened by the National Democrats, asked Thugutt whether he was fully aware of "the stakes of the game being played, and what its consequences might be." Thugutt simply replied that it was too late to turn back.⁷⁵

In the fourth vote, which would decide whether it would be Wojciechowski or Narutowicz who faced Zamoyski, Narutowicz's cause was further strengthened by nine renegade PPS deputies who, contrary to the decision taken by their party's leadership, wanted to prove their independence from Piłsudski.⁷⁶ It also appears that Narutowicz received the votes of four National Democrats, who believed that it would be to Zamoyski's advantage to face him rather than Wojciechowski in the runoff. In any case, both interventions were unnecessary—the votes of Liberation and the minorities alone were enough to put Narutowicz in the runoff.

According to the right-wing press, the news that the runoff would be between Narutowicz and Zamoyski filled the National Democrats' backrooms with hope that Piast might now reconsider voting against the "Polish majority" and opt for the "national candidate."⁷⁷ Indeed, Piast found itself in an awkward position. Voting for Wojciechowski, a farm cooperative activist and their own candidate, even in the company of the national minorities, would have been significantly different than opting for Narutowicz, an unknown Swiss-educated academic and reputed Freemason, whose victory over Wojciechowski had been assured by the Minorities' Bloc. The alternative was no less appealing. Not only did Piast have little love for the National Democrats but, as mentioned earlier, Zamoyski was Poland's largest individual landowner—the *bête noire* of virtually all smallholders and middle sized peasants. Given this situation, in the break preceding the final vote, Piast held an emergency meeting. After a heated debate a fateful decision was made.⁷⁸ Witos claims that he urged his party to vote for Zamoyski, but his rank and file deputies' distrust of "the Count" carried the day.⁷⁹

Thus Piast deputies were set to unanimously vote for Narutowicz. With that, Zamoyski's fate was sealed. Narutowicz carried the day by 289 votes to the latter's 227. Yet, the mood in the *Sejm* was far from jubilant. According to the somewhat tendentious report in the *Gazeta Warszawska*, the announcement of Narutowicz's victory was greeted with only scattered applause, even on the left half of the *Sejm*.⁸⁰

Figure VII.4 1922 Presidential Election Results⁸¹

	I	II	III	IV	V
Zamoyski	222	228	228	224	227
Narutowicz	62	151	158	171	289
Wojciechowski	105	152	150	146	-
Baudouin De Courtenay	103	10	5	-	-
Daszyński	49	1	-	-	-
Spoiled votes	4	3	3	4	29
Total	545	54	544	545	545

Since the person of Narutowicz will play a crucial role in this story, it is important to take a brief look at his political background and try to understand the mechanics behind his unlikely selection as Liberation's presidential candidate. Gabriel Narutowicz was born in the village of Telesze (Telšiai) in Lithuania into a noble Polish-Lithuanian family, distantly related to the Piłsudskis.⁸² The background of the two men had many similarities – both were raised primarily by their mothers and, in the wake of the failure of the January Uprising, brought up in what would appear to be a very similar intensely patriotic atmosphere which stressed the traditions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In fact, Narutowicz's brother, Stanisław, was a signatory of Lithuania's declaration of independence and devoted his political life to the failed mission of creating a political space for Polish speaking Lithuanians in that country.⁸³

While Narutowicz and Piłsudski shared many formative influences, sensibilities, and, it would appear, a common vision of the Polish nation, their lives could not have unfolded more differently.⁸⁴ Narutowicz began studies in engineering in St Petersburg, but because of poor health in 1886 he was sent by his family to Davos, Switzerland. He subsequently enrolled at the Zurich Polytechnic. Loose involvement in a socialist revolutionary group led to his being briefly arrested by the Swiss police. The incident itself was not significant, except for the fact that the Tsarist authorities issued a warrant for his arrest which effectively prevented him from returning home. Thus, Narutowicz stayed in Switzerland, where he became a professor at the Zurich Polytechnic and a universally respected specialist in hydroelectric engineering. Consumed by his career, Narutowicz had no effective involvement in the Polish cause until the outbreak of World War I, at which point he became involved in fundraising and propaganda work on behalf of Piłsudski's legionary movement.

Narutowicz took some time before making the fateful decision to give up his successful and comfortable life and "return" to Poland, a country he had never actually lived in.⁸⁵ But patriotism appears to have triumphed in his heart, and in September 1919 he accepted the position of Minister of Public Works in the Polish Government. He would remain in this post, despite the ever changing cabinets around him, until 1922. Following his impressive performance at the Peace Conference in Genoa in April 1922, he was asked to assume the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. His work at the ministry won accolades from Piłsudski and his supporters.⁸⁶ In the elections of 1922, Narutowicz was

involved in creating the National-Civic Union and contested the election as part of the Civic Union in the Kresy without success.

While Narutowicz was a fervent supporter of Piłsudski, he was not, as we have seen, Piłsudski's choice for the presidency. In fact, Piłsudski advised Narutowicz to turn down the nomination and his operatives worked behind the scenes to ensure the success of Wojciechowski. The idea of putting forth the candidacy of Narutowicz was largely the handiwork of Liberation's leader, Stanisław Thugutt. Indeed, outside the narrow coterie of Piłsudczyks and progressive Warsaw liberals, he was largely unknown, not only in Polish society but even among the country's political class. As Thugutt recollects, his selection of Narutowicz as the party's candidate raised some objections from the rank and file, because only a few of the deputies knew anything about him.⁸⁷ Even Thugutt himself, had only a vague grasp of Narutowicz's stance on many issues. However, he saw this as a positive thing and proof of the fact that Narutowicz, who was neither a socialist nor a populist but a "moderate Swiss radical," was not a partisan candidate.⁸⁸

Still Liberation's choice of Narutowicz was particularly strange not only given Piłsudski's preference for Wojciechowski, which had been communicated to Thugutt rather clearly, but also due to the jarring disconnect between Narutowicz's persona as a worldly and sophisticated nobleman, and Liberation's peasant base of support.⁸⁹ Nor was Narutowicz himself particularly eager to become a presidential candidate. Encouraged by Piłsudski, he initially resisted Thugutt's entreaties, claiming everything from poor health to the lack of knowledge of Polish politics. Only after putting up a "long and bitter fight,"

he conditionally agreed, saying: “I do not want to put forth my candidacy, but if Liberation decides to do it, there is nothing I can do.”⁹⁰

As we have seen, Narutowicz’s election was largely the result of contingent factors. Thugutt’s eccentric and intransigent personality, the conflict between Liberation and Piast, the Bloc’s antipathy for Wojciechowski for his past dealings with the National Democrats, and the Endeks’ disastrous championing of Poland’s most prolific landowner, all conspired to raise Narutowicz to the highest post in the country. Yet, while his election was largely the confluence of a series of accidents, Narutowicz appeared to be the perfect target for the right’s claims that the election had been fixed by the Jews and imposed upon the Polish majority. As Thugutt writes, Narutowicz “immediately made the impression of a man of very subtle and very deep culture of thought and character.”⁹¹ According to Piłsudski, he immediately stood among Polish politicians as a “European.”⁹² This worldly and “European” persona and his dignified bearing rendered Narutowicz offensive to populist sensibilities, even for many on the left. As Adam Pragier writes, many PPS members disliked Narutowicz because they believed that “he was too great a lord.”⁹³

If this was the sentiment on the left, we can only imagine how the right would perceive the new president. Given his Lithuanian and Swiss background and his worldly connections, Narutowicz was particularly easy to present “as some kind of overseas devil or Elder of Zion.”⁹⁴ Wojciechowski, a more plebeian figure, appeared to be less elitist and elicited more familiarity and sympathy among populists on both the left and right. While

there is no doubt that, with the possible exception of Piłsudski, any candidate chosen with the aid of the National Minorities Bloc would have been the target of widespread protests by the NDs, Narutowicz appeared to be tailor made to act as the lightning rod for the right's discontent. His accidental election was only the last in a series of contingent factors which conspired to produce the most serious political crisis in independent Poland until Piłsudski's 1926 Coup D'état.

¹ The full name was the *Chrześcijański Związek Jedności Narodowej* or the Christian Union of National Unity, but the bloc was also known as ChZJN, ChJN, or, to its enemies, Chjena. The bloc was composed of three parties. Two of them, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy* (ZLN) and *Stronnictwo Chrześcijańsko Narodowe* (SChN), represented the National Democratic movement. The third party were Christian Democrats (ChD). In the *Sejm* the parties retained their separate identities. For more on the ChZJN and the genesis of the D'Hondt system see Chapter VI.

² "Olbrzymia więkrzość narodu za Piłsudskim," *Głos Prawdy*, November 25, 1922, 677.

³ Based on Ajnenkiel, *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*.

⁴ "Przed wyborem prezydium sejmu i senatu," *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 1, 1922.

⁵ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 11–12.

⁶ Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 596, 606 note 40a.

⁷ Indeed, the right-wing press made analogies between 1912 and 1922. For example "O Polskę w Polsce," *Gazeta Poranna*, Decmber 3, 1922.

⁸ "My i oni," *Gazeta Poranna*, Novmber 17, 1922.

⁹ "Wielka ofensywa żydowska," *Gazeta Poranna*, Novmber 19, 1922.

¹⁰ "Żydzi a Polska," *Gazeta Poranna*, Novmber 21, 1922.

¹¹ Kazimierz Lutosławski, "Obróciło się koło historii." *Mysł Narodowa*, November 18, 1922, 2.

¹² Kazimierz Lutosławski, "Obróciło się koło historii."

¹³ KRMSW 297 IV, t4/524.

¹⁴ "Walka o polskość wyższych uczelni w Polsce," *Gazeta Poranna*, Novmber 24, 1922.

¹⁵ KRMSW 297 IV, t4/531.

¹⁶ KRMSW 297 IV, t4/533.

¹⁷ KRMSW 297 IV, t4/543.

¹⁸ "Zdrowy odruch wśród młodzieży," *Gazeta Warszwska*, November 5, 1922.

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- ¹⁹ “Walka o polskość wyższych uczelni w Polsce,” *Gazeta Poranna*, November 24, 1922.
- ²⁰ SSRP no. 2, December 2, 1922, 15-16.
- ²¹ Kazimierz Lutosławski, “Ostatnia walka o niepoległość,” *Myśl Narodowa*, December 2, 1922, 1.
- ²² Kazimierz Lutosławski, “Ostatnia walka o niepoległość,” 3.
- ²³ Kazimierz Lutosławski, “Ostatnia walka o niepoległość,” 4.
- ²⁴ “Dzień wczorajszy w sejmie,” *Gazeta Poranna*, November 24, 1922.
- ²⁵ “Żydzi są gotowi do rządów” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 1, 1922.
- ²⁶ “Ktokolwiek nim będzie,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, November 15, 1922.
- ²⁷ “Nieporozumienie,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 1, 1922 See also Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 30.
- ²⁸ “Nieporozumienie.”
- ²⁹ Kazimierz Lutosławski, “Zmora,” *Myśl Narodowa* 50, December 9, 1922, 5-6.
- ³⁰ “P. Witos na rozdrożu,” *Kurjer Poznański*, December 5, 1922.
- ³¹ “P. Witos na rozdrożu.”
- ³² For example: “O Polskę w Polsce,” *Gazeta Poranna* December 3, 1922; “Przed decyzją,” *Dziennik Poznański*, December 3, 1922. “O Polskość kierowników Narodu,” *Gazeta Warszawska* November 24, 1922.
- ³³ “Kuszenie Witos,” *Gazeta Poranna*, November 21, 1922.
- ³⁴ The devil has a had a long association with the crossroads. This is no less true in central European peasant culture no less than in the Mississippi Delta.
- ³⁵ “Kuszenie Witos.”
- ³⁶ Based on Ajnenkiel, *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*.
- ³⁷ However, under Grunbum’s impetuous leadership the Jews chose, perhaps somewhat foolishly, to assume a highly visible position as the leaders of the Bloc.
- ³⁸ “Na marginesie list kandydatów,” *Głos Prawdy*, October 7, 1922, 567.
- ³⁹ Zagórski, “Przed oddaniem głosu,” *Głos Prawdy*, November 4, 1922, 629.
- ⁴⁰ Grünbaum was widely considered to be utterly tactless and was detested by the entire Polish press. Indeed, many of his remarks in the *Sejm* could be described as gratuitously provocative. For example, when the Polish parliament passed a law, supported by the left, declaring Sunday as a mandatory day of rest, Grünbaum exclaimed that “Now you have lost Wilno, Mińsk and Lwów!” His remark was widely assumed to mean that Grünbaum would attempt to use his influence with the Western powers in order to ensure that these cities do not go to Poland. Grünbaum himself later explained that he only meant to indicate that after having passed such a law, the Poles could not count on the support of the Jewish population of these cities. Whatever his intentions may have been, the comment won him few friends. On another occasion he referred to Jewish life in Poland as “hell.” Again, while his statement may have been accurate, it was not politically astute and rendered universally detested by all Poles. See SSSU no. 41 May 23, 1919, 72; SSSU no. 180, October 29, 1920, 59.

⁴¹ According to Adam Pragier, the Germans were the most hostile towards Poland but also most the discreet. But it was the Jews who “foolishly decided to publicly play the role of the Bloc’s organizers.” Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 228.

⁴² Indeed, Jewish left-wing parties, such as Poalei Zion or the Bund were not represented in the Bloc. “P. Grünbaum, Blok Mniejszości a demokracja,” *Robotnik*, November 19, 1922.

⁴³ “Skutki wyborów,” *Przyjaciel Ludu*, November 19, 1922.

⁴⁴ “Ostatnie zabiegi,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, November 21, 1922.

⁴⁵ “Trudne zadanie,” *Kurjer Polski*, November 9, 1922.

⁴⁶ “Trudne zadanie.”

⁴⁷ “Chjena a mniejszości narodowe,” *Robotnik*, November 17, 1922.

⁴⁸ “Chjena a mniejszości narodowe.”

⁴⁹ “Bajka o zwrocie na prawo,” *Robotnik*, November 18, 1922.

⁵⁰ “Olbrzymia więkrzość narodu za Piłsudskim,” 677.

⁵¹ Stanisław Thugutt, “Przyczynek do historii pierwszego Zgromadzenia Narodowego,” in *Gabriel Narutowicz we wspomnieniach współczesnych polityków*, ed. by Kazimierz Stembrowicz (Warszawa: Wydawn. Sejmowe, 1992), 53.

⁵² Józef Piłsudski, “Przemówienie na zebraniu w Prezydium Rady Ministrów (4 grudnia 1922 r.),” in *Pisma zbiorowe*, ed. by Kazimierz Świtalski, vol. 5 (Warszawa: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1937), 296.

⁵³ Stanisław Thugutt, *Autobiografia* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1984), 85.

⁵⁴ Janusz Pajewski, *Gabriel Narutowicz: Pierwszy Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1993), 131.

⁵⁵ “Przed wyborami prezydenta,” *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 9, 1922.

⁵⁶ “Czy PSL zawrze sojusz z Ch.Z.J.N: Rozmowa z prezesem zarządu głównego PSL, posłem Janem Dębskim,” *Kurjer Polski* November 26, 1922.

⁵⁷ “Przed wyborami prezydenta,” *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 9, 1922.

⁵⁸ “Przed posiedzeniem Zgromadzenia Narodowego,” *Robotnik*, December 10, 1922.

⁵⁹ Bernard Singer, “Blok mniejszości narodowych,” *Nasz Przegląd*, December 18, 1922 quoted in Singer, *Od Witosa do Sławka*, 116.

⁶⁰ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 83.

⁶¹ Zamoyski, like many other politicians, had fallen to the charms of Piłsudski’s charisma and while initially ill disposed towards the latter, became a friend after their first meeting. Kozicki, *Pamiętnik*, 392. The left-leaning *Kurjer Polski* thought Zamoyski to be “moderate and sympathetic.” “Odruchy,” *Kurjer Polski*, December 11, 1922. Ironically enough, Gabriel Narutowicz suggested Zamoyski to Piłsudski as a possible compromise candidate, capable of placating the right, without antagonizing the left. Józef Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” in *Pisma zbiorowe*, ed. by Kazimierz Świtalski, vol. 6 (Warszawa: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1937), 52.

⁶² Thugutt, “Przyczynek do historii pierwszego Zgromadzenia Narodowego,” 56.

⁶³ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 233.

⁶⁴ Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 49.

⁶⁵ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 235.

⁶⁶ Baudouin de Courtenay was a fascinating character, and a life-long critic of racism and anti-Semitism. According to Pragier: “He was at war with the mighty of this world, and a defender of the oppressed. He didn’t pull his punches for the left or the right, and attacked the National Democrats, the clergy, anti-Semites, freethinkers, rich Jews, tax evaders, militarists. He was a secular saint, who was so non-conformist that he was too much even for the Freemasons.” Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 232.

⁶⁷ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 83.

⁶⁸ “Przed posiedzeniem Zgromadzenia Narodowego,” *Robotnik*, December 10, 1922.

⁶⁹ “Przed posiedzeniem Zgromadzenia Narodowego.”

⁷⁰ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 84.

⁷¹ “Przed posiedzeniem Zgromadzenia Narodowego.”

⁷² “Przed posiedzeniem Zgromadzenia Narodowego.”

⁷³ This was the claim made by the *Kurjer Poranny*, and seems like the most plausible explanation of the additional votes garnered by the ChJN, which only had 216 deputies. “Pierwszy Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,” *Kurjer Poranny* December 10, 1922.

⁷⁴ *Protokół Zgromadzenia Narodowego dla wyboru Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dn. 9 grudnia 1922 r.*

⁷⁵ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 84.

⁷⁶ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 237.

⁷⁷ “Wybór Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 10, 1922.

⁷⁸ “Na marginesie wczorajszego głosowania,” *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 10, 1922; Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 30.

⁷⁹ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 30.

⁸⁰ “Walka dwóch obozów,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 10, 1922.

⁸¹ *Protokół Zgromadzenia Narodowego*.

⁸² Their common background as landowners from the *Kresy* would almost immediately draw the two men close. Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 36, 42.

⁸³ For the fascinating and tragic life of Stanisław Narutowicz see Krzysztof Buchowski, “Stanisław Narutowicz: Szkic do portretu idealisty,” *Biuletyn Historii Pogranicza* 2 (2001): 41–51.

⁸⁴ Narutowicz himself left no written records behind, and it is difficult to tell precisely how he thought or felt about his Polish nationness. However, his background, political affiliation and the testimonies of those who knew him would indicate that his vision of Poland was very close to that of Piłsudski.

⁸⁵ His home in Telesze was now part of the independent state of Lithuania.

⁸⁶ Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 46.

⁸⁷ Thugutt, “Przyczynek do historii pierwszego Zgromadzenia Narodowego,” 53.

⁸⁸ Thugutt, “Przyczynek do historii pierwszego Zgromadzenia Narodowego,” 54.

⁸⁹ Thugutt, “Przyczynek do historii pierwszego Zgromadzenia Narodowego,” 57.

⁹⁰ Thugutt, “Przyczynek do historii pierwszego Zgromadzenia Narodowego,” 56–57. Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 53–54.

⁹¹ Thugutt, "Przyczynek do historii pierwszego Zgromadzenia Narodowego," 54.

⁹² Piłsudski, "Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu," 42.

⁹³ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 236.

⁹⁴ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 233.

CHAPTER VIII

Mobilization, Violence, and Murder

Since the election of the president ended up taking over eight hours and newspapers bearing news of the results would not be out until the morning, a crowd of people, mostly university and high school students, gathered in front of the *Sejm* building to await the winner. According to the historian Janusz Pajewski, who as a youth also found his way there, the vast majority of those present expected Zamoyski to triumph. The atmosphere was tense and the news that Narutowicz was elected was greeted with incredulity and anger. When the verdict was announced, Pajewski heard cries of “Down with Narutowicz!” “Down with the one chosen by Jews!” and “Down with Witos!”¹ Yet, Pajewski, like the vast majority of Poles, including the police, army, and highest ranking Piłsudczyks had no idea of the magnitude of the anger which would rock Warsaw in the following days.

Down with the Jews!

While some of the youths, like Pajewski, went home after learning the results, others lingered about. Next day, *Gazeta Warszawska* the leading National Democratic

newspaper, offered the following enthusiastic description of the events immediately following the election:

On the news that Narutowicz, a supporter of [Piłsudski] will become president thanks to the votes of the Jews, Germans, and other 'national minorities,' from the breasts of the youth a single spontaneous cry went forth 'We don't want this president! We don't know him! Down with the Jews!' This cry ran through the streets of Warsaw and spontaneously a great march was formed.²

According to *Gazeta Warszawska*, the youths from *Sejm* formed the core of the march, but in the streets they were joined by large numbers of other Varsovians. The procession made its way down Nowy Świat Street and Ujazdowskie Avenue to the apartment of Józef Haller. Haller, a former general, had been the organizer and commander of the so-called "Blue Army" of Polish exiles, émigrés, and POWs who found their way to France. He was known for his nationalist views and National Democratic sympathies, and the "Blue Army," in keeping with Haller's own ideological commitments, had a reputation for anti-Semitic "excesses."³ Since Haller was just about the only high profile general with rightist sympathies, he had been courted by the National Democrats and had recently resigned his post in the army in order to enter politics.⁴ He was duly elected from the SChN list, and seemed to hold out the promise of providing the Polish right with something it had never had but desperately needed—a charismatic military leader capable of rivaling Piłsudski's charisma.

Haller did his best not to disappoint. From his balcony, he delivered a fiery speech to the crowds. "Today the Poland you had fought for has been trampled upon," he thundered, "and your instincts are a sign that the anger of the nation, of which you are

the spokesmen, is rising like a wave.”⁵ *Gazeta Warszawska* and the lower-brow National Democratic *Gazeta Poranna* did their best to cast Haller as the “leader” of this wave of anger. “In a moving scene,” *Gazeta Warszawska* reported, “people threw themselves to kiss Haller’s hands,” while chants of “Long live our leader!” filled the air.⁶ This casting about for a “leader” was not accidental. The fascist March on Rome in Italy had taken place less than three months before the Polish elections, and right-wing newspapers were full of admiration for Mussolini and his movement. As we will see, many Poles hoped to make use of the election of Narutowicz in order to emulate Mussolini’s seizure of power.

From Haller’s apartment the crowd proceeded to the joint offices of the *Gazeta Poranna* and *Gazeta Warszawska*. According to the latter, “thunderous chants” of “Down with the Jews!” filled the air.⁷ The protesters were greeted by Antoni Sadzewicz, editor of *Gazeta Poranna* and a National Democratic deputy. In his speech, more overtly anti-Semitic than Haller’s, Sadzewicz framed the election in a deeper historical narrative of Jewish attempts to subvert the will of the Polish nation. “In 1912 the Jews imposed Jagiełło upon Poland as a deputy to the Duma,” he proclaimed, “and now Narutowicz as President.”⁸ He concluded his oration by urging more protests on the following day. With that, the crowd dissipated. At the same time a separate group attempted to launch a protest in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where Narutowicz was working, but was dispersed by police. Yet another protest focused around the offices of the left-wing paper *Kurjer Poranny*.⁹

While the outpouring of anger was ominous, it was not immediately clear what course of action the protests would take in the following days. Violent political demonstrations were not uncommon in Warsaw in the early 1920s. Even Piłsudski himself admitted to the fact that initially he did not take the protests seriously.¹⁰ Police records of the days following the election of Narutowicz are conspicuously missing. This could be because the Warsaw police quickly found themselves totally overwhelmed by events or, more likely, because they tried to cover up their own incompetence and (as we will see) tacit cooperation with the protesters. However, the last entry of the political police reports, dated December 7, 1922 (two days before the election), contains some interesting insights. The report discusses former members of the Polish Military Organization (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa* or POW), a secret Piłsudczyk organization dedicated to national independence, and the PPS. The POW was disbanded in 1918 but its members kept in touch and, according to their enemies, constituted a mafia-like organization which infiltrated many parties and could still be used by Piłsudski for his purposes. According to the report, former POW members “demanded” that Piłsudski be elected president or, at the very least, that he become Commander in Chief of the armed forces. PPS, the report went on to argue, would call for “revolution” if a right-wing candidate were elected. In this sense, according to the police, the position of the PPS was identical to that of the Communists.¹¹ However, not a word was mentioned about a possible reaction of the right to the election of a left-wing candidate—it does not seem the police believed that this possibility could result in serious violence. Thus, when Warsaw went to

sleep on the night of December 9, no one seemed to realize what lay in store in the next few days.

In Chapter VI, I presented the argument that the National Democrats' primary electoral strategy was to focus the anger felt by many Poles as a result of economic and political dislocations onto the country's Jewish community. As National Democratic electoral pamphlets illustrate, everything from rising rents to pornography was blamed on "the Jews." Following the elections, in light of the National Minorities' Bloc's key position in the parliamentary balance of power, this general narrative was supplemented by a more specific one, of a Jewish attempt to "take over" Poland. This was beaten home in speeches, pamphlets, and newspapers. The election of Narutowicz, though entirely contingent on a number of seemingly random events, appeared to be perfectly scripted to fit into this narrative.

Narutowicz, an unknown, cosmopolitan, and somewhat mysterious Swiss émigré was elected to the presidency with the aid of the Jewish-led National Minorities' Bloc. The Polish public, or at least National Democratic voters, had long been conditioned to interpret such an outcome as a "Jewish takeover" of their country. And if some may have still had doubts, the National Democratic newspapers appearing on the morning of Sunday, December 10 made sure that the election of Narutowicz was interpreted in this manner. Just as before the election, the brunt of the pressure had been on the centrist Piast, so now the peasant party was widely interpreted as the main culprit and blamed for allowing the Jews to gain control Poland.

This story was pitched by all the major right-wing newspapers in Warsaw on the morning following the election. The tone was set by Stanisław Stroński's article in *Rzeczpospolita*, somewhat mysteriously entitled "Their President."¹² While the title may sound cryptic to us, National Democratic sympathizers would have immediately known who "they" referred to—the minorities and, specifically, the Jews. It was left up to the reader to juxtapose "them" against "us," presumably "real" Poles. According to Stroński, Narutowicz had been "imposed" upon the Polish majority by the Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians. This fact "created a state of affairs which the Polish majority must fight against"¹³

The Kurjer Warszawski, a right-wing paper not officially affiliated with the NDs, prophesied that the Zionist leader Grünbaum would now "be able to pull [Piast leader] Witos around by his nose."¹⁴ The language used by the papers was suggestive and graphic. In a front page article, *Gazeta Warszawska* claimed that the "the rule of the Polish majority was murdered last night."¹⁵ Personal attacks on the new president were also tailored to fit the narrative of Jewish influence and domination. According to *Gazeta Warszawska*, Narutowicz owed his entire career to "Jewish financial circles" and his rise in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Professor Szymon Askenazy, the Polish-Jewish historian who, to the outrage of the National Democrats, had been selected by Piłsudski as Poland's ambassador to the League of Nations.¹⁶ According to *Gazeta Poranna*, Narutowicz "had made lots of money in Switzerland," a fact which was presumably suspicious in itself. Even more ominously, his wealth led to "the anonymous great power" of world Jewry taking a special interest in him.¹⁷

But perhaps most forcefully articulated was the narrative of Polish *resistance* to the “Jewish takeover.” Indeed, if the National Democrats were motivated by a *fear* of the Jews, this was not the impression one got from reading their press, which appeared to be certain of an ultimate Polish victory. By far the dominant emotion was anger. In a front page article entitled “Victory over Poland,” *Gazeta Poranna* argued that “the fight for Poland and the right of the Polish nation would continue, and in this fight the Polish nation must be victorious.”¹⁸ Another article warned that “Warsaw will not fail! She will pick up the gauntlet thrown down [by the Jews] peacefully, with dignity, but with determination to carry the fight to the bitter end.”¹⁹ Yet another article called for a Poland that was “free from the Jews” and for “liberation from Jewish-Masonic influence.”²⁰ Thus, while the Jews had won a major battle, the war was far from over. All newspapers called for forceful demonstrations against the newly elected president.

Obviously, it is impossible to say to what extent the violence which took place later that day was the result of agitation by the right-wing press. However, there is no doubt that the headlines of the right-wing newspapers fitted perfectly into a script which had been articulated and relentlessly argued by the National Democrats for years. The Jewish takeover of Poland, which had hitherto been a murky and vague plot taking place somewhere behind the scenes, all of a sudden came out into the open and became explicitly linked to a very specific political outcome. In other words, the whole hitherto conspiratorial narrative now hinged on a single issue—the election of the “Jewish president.” The battle lines could not have been any clearer. On the one side stood the

Jews and their “stooges,” who had elected Narutowicz. On the other were those “real” Poles who tried to resist the Jewish conspiracy.

Indeed, this was the message of the leaders of the ChZJN, which was duly reprinted in the right-wing dailies. In a special communiqué, signed by National Democratic and Christian Democratic luminaries such as Stanisław Grabski, Wojciech Korfanty, Juliusz Zdanowski, Stanisław Głabiński, Józef Chaciński, Stanisław Stroński, and Edward Dubanowicz, the ChZJN claimed the following:

The Polish nation must feel the election of the very first president of the Republic [by the national minorities] ... to be a serious insult to those generations who had fought for independence. ... The ChZJN cannot take responsibility in this unhealthy state of affairs and will refuse any kind of support for a government nominated by a president imposed by foreign nationalities—Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians.²¹

Clearly, the press and the National Democratic (as well as Christian Democratic) deputies were of one mind: Narutowicz, the “Jewish president” was an illegitimate imposition upon the nation. Assuming that one had already bought into the National Democratic narrative, such an interpretation indeed made sense. The “Polish majority” had been cheated out of its rightful place in running the country! Still, while there were plenty of people angry about the election results, the demonstrations which took place on December 10 were not quite as “spontaneous” as the National Democratic press would later claim they were. *Gazeta Poranna* and *Gazeta Warszawska* both urged Varsovians to show their displeasure with election and even suggested rallying points for demonstrators. As we will see, the anti-Semitic *Rozwój* (Development) organization,

composed mostly of students and closely tied to the National Democrats was also instrumental in mobilizing the protesters.

The largest of the demonstrations to take place on December 10, started in the morning on May 3 Avenue, near the banks of the Vistula River. The crowd, made up mostly of students, proceeded once again to General Haller's apartment on Ujazdowskie Avenue. This time the General was met with chants of "Long live Haller, the president of Poland!"²² He, in turn, greeted the protesters with a more overtly anti-Semitic speech calling for a social boycott of the Jews and urging "determination and perseverance."²³ However, the general made no specific demands or promises. Perhaps, the rather unimaginative Haller wasn't ready to assume the role of the "leader" (*wódz*) that the right-wing youth were waiting for. Or perhaps, like many other National Democratic leaders, he was beginning to see the anarchy in the streets as a danger. At any rate, the speech seems to have fallen somewhat flat since, unlike his previous oration, it was not reprinted in the press.²⁴

The marchers then proceed to the *Sejm*, where they chanted "Shame!" and "Down with him!"²⁵ The National Democratic deputy Father Nowakowski made a speech in which he claimed that "all evil in Poland was the fault of the Jews and their lackey Witos," the peasant Piast leader. From the *Sejm*, the demonstrators moved up Nowy Świat and Krakowskie Przedmieście streets, to the European Hotel, where Narutowicz lived.²⁶

On the way they passed the Italian mission, where they chanted “Long live Mussolini!” and “Down with the Jews!”²⁷ The Italian mission would continue to be a rallying place for demonstrators. As the *Kurjer Poznański* wrote:

It is no accident that the manifestations stopped in front of the Italian mission to cheer for Mussolini. The Nation has to follow the example of Italy. ... The time for the great final effort has come – otherwise it may be too late.²⁸

The warm feelings for Mussolini are understandable, even though the National Democrats still officially stood for parliamentary democracy. In fact, the fascist sympathies foreshadowed an important cleavage in the movement, between those who would remain faithful to the parliamentary system, like the old Galician politicians Grabski and Głębiński, and younger activists who would later embrace a more openly authoritarian, and eventually totalitarian, path.²⁹

After passing the Italian mission and briefly loitering around the European Hotel, the protesters moved to Teatralny Square where they listened to speeches by *Rozwój* activists Opęchowski and Iłski. The crowds then dispersed, but another rally began at 4pm at the *Rozwój* headquarters, located at 2 Żurawia Street. In addition to students, veterans of General Haller’s and General Dowbor’s armies (known respectively as *Halerczycy* and *Dowborczycy*) were prominently in attendance.³⁰ The crowd was treated to speeches by the Christian Democratic deputy Tadeusz Dymowski and the Endek Father Kazimierz Lutosławski.³¹ Dymowski outlined the political situation and the goals of the National Democratic movement. Piast deputies, he argued, were “terrified” by the protests in Warsaw and in the process of begging Narutowicz to resign. If the president

proved intransigent, Dymowski claimed, Piast would join the right in boycotting the swearing in ceremony. He also urged the students “to last one more day and organize a demonstration on a European scale.” In conclusion, he promised to “settle the students’ demands regarding the Jewish question,” and quickly hurried off to a meeting of ChZJN deputies.³²

Following the rally, a resolution was proclaimed in an attempt to articulate the demands of the gathered youth and their leaders. The language of the resolution is instructive, and it is worthwhile to cite it in full:

The gathered Polish and Catholic people, shaken to the depths of their souls by the brazen audacity of the Jews and the Polish politicians controlled by them, who against the wishes of the Polish majority dared to impose their candidate upon the Polish nation, demand: (1) From Mr. Narutowicz that he not accept the insult perpetrated upon the nation by his agreement and oath, and that he not accept the [presidency]. (2) From the ‘Piast’ deputies, led by Witos down a perilous path, that they acknowledge their error in a manly fashion and turn back from the pernicious path they have set upon. (3) From the National deputies, that they decisively and uncompromisingly fight the demands of the Jews in Poland, until the complete liberation of our country from their shameful yoke.³³

The resolution is interesting in two respects. In the first place, there are no demands whatsoever addressed to the minorities or the Jews. While, Piast and Narutowicz are attacked, they are also offered a way out of the respective predicaments they found themselves in. The exclusively evil motivations of the Jews are taken for granted and, even more important, appear to be beyond redemption. Witos and Narutowicz may be susceptible to threats. The minorities are not even worth threatening—it appears as if they are constitutionally incapable of playing a constructive role in the Polish political

community, and unable to change their ways. The only way of dealing with them is to “fight them decisively and uncompromisingly.”

After proclaiming the resolution and chanting patriotic hymns such as *Rota*, “well organized groups,” each one numbering sixteen demonstrators draped in national flags began leaving the Rozwój headquarters. For the most part, they repeated the agenda of the morning demonstration. Chants of “Down with the Jews!” were again uttered at the Italian mission and the European Hotel. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where Narutowicz was still working, a *Rzeczpospolita* journalist named Misiakowski gave a speech in which he claimed that Szymon Askenazy will become the new Premier.³⁴

The crowd then moved down the two biggest thoroughfares of Warsaw, Marszałkowska Street and Jerozolimskie Avenue, beating up people on the way. While the left-wing *Kurjer Poranny* notes that “anyone who didn’t take off their hat quickly enough at the sight of the patriotic procession” was beaten up, there is no doubt that it was Jews who were singled out by the demonstrators and who suffered the brunt of the attacks. In fact, *all* Jews (or people identified as Jews) unlucky enough to be spotted by the marchers were beaten up. Trams were stopped in the middle of the street, and Jewish passengers were pulled out, thrown on the street, and beaten. The police did not intervene.³⁵ Following these “excesses,” as the press dubbed them, the demonstrators returned to their headquarters at Rozwój.

While the organized protest ended in the evening, the violence was far from over and the mood in the capital was foreboding. According to Bernard Singer, attempts were

made to loot Jewish stores and “suspicious individuals” with carts and wagons intended for storing looted goods appeared in the city.³⁶ Of course, who was and who was not a Jew was ultimately up to the rampaging youths. An unlucky priest, a certain Father Popławski from a parish in Wola, happened to be travelling on a tram on Marszałkowska Street during the protests. He presumably had a “Jewish appearance,” and so was duly thrown off the tram and beaten up. When the attackers finally saw the priest’s cassock sticking out from under his long coat they apologized and offered their help. Father Popławski refused. “With two gashes on his head and soaked in blood,” he proceeded on his way.³⁷

Maciej Rataj, the Piast speaker of the *Sejm*, took a walk through the city in the evening and was profoundly dejected by what he saw. Groups of youths roamed the streets “hunting for Jews” and chanting threats against the president. The police were doing nothing to stop them. On Wiejska Street, near the *Sejm*, Rataj observed the following “characteristic” scene. A well-dressed man in a fur coat was having a chat with a night watchman (one of the least prestigious occupations in interwar Poland), explaining the political situation to the latter. Rataj caught a snippet of the conversation. “They chose a thief-president, the Jewish stooge Narutowicz,” the well-dressed man was saying.³⁸ The left had remained passive for most of the day, though according to *Kurjer Polski* groups of socialist workers occasionally brawled with students.³⁹ According to *Robotnik* a worker counter-demonstration also took place but it was scarcely noticed amidst the violence.⁴⁰

The reaction in the streets had an immediate impact on Poland's political class. The right, on the offensive in the streets, attempted to derail the constitutional process. While Narutowicz had already been elected, the swearing in ceremony was set for Monday, December 11. According to some opinions, if there was no quorum (at least 50% of deputies and senators) in the National Assembly, the swearing-in ceremony would not be binding. With that goal in mind, the leaders of the three ChJN clubs decided that they would boycott the swearing in ceremony and question its validity, thus putting further pressure on Narutowicz to resign.

Piast's Capitulation to the "Polish Majority"

As the violent crowds marched through the capital, Narutowicz spent the morning working at his old post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was only in the afternoon that the president-elect met Maciej Rataj, the Speaker of the *Sejm*, to discuss the political situation. Rataj told Narutowicz about the right's plans to boycott the swearing in ceremony and attempted to impress upon him the gravity of the situation. Narutowicz's situation was particularly difficult, Rataj cautioned, since unlike Piłsudski, he had no real political base of his own. "Do you have even 100-1000 men in Poland upon whom you can rely unconditionally?" he asked. "I know that I do not," Narutowicz replied.⁴¹ According to *Kurjer Warszawski*, Rataj also communicated to Narutowicz that he could not count on Piast's support and suggested that he resign.⁴²

While the truth of the latter assertion cannot be corroborated (Rataj does not mention it in his memoirs), there is no doubt that the whole Piast party was in a funk, and desperately trying to back out of its earlier support for Narutowicz. As we have seen, the primary targets of the National Democrats' anger (and of the violence), were the Jews and the newly elected president. But Piast and its leader Wincenty Witos, accused of being traitors (*zaprzańcy*) and "Jewish stooges," were close behind. The peasant party and its leaders caved in to the pressure with astonishing speed. Even though they had voted for Narutowicz just the day before, by the afternoon of December 10 many deputies had reversed their position. "As a result of the events taking place in Warsaw a strange consternation seized our club," Witos writes in his memoirs. Many Piast deputies "saw the resignation of Narutowicz as the only way out."⁴³

Indeed, whether the reports of Rataj attempting to persuade Narutowicz to resign in his capacity as Speaker of the *Sejm* were fabricated or not, there is no doubt that his colleagues from Piast did exactly that. Later that day, Witos led a delegation of Piast deputies to meet with Narutowicz. Instead of congratulating the president, whom he had just helped elect, Witos argued "quite insistently," as he later put it, that it would be in the "interest of the state" if the president were to resign.⁴⁴ Later on Sunday afternoon, the Piast parliamentary club issued a public declaration that can only be described as a cowardly capitulation to the National Democratic Doctrine of the Polish Majority:

Piast took the view that both because of foreign relations and due to the necessity of consolidating the internal situation, it was necessary that the candidate for the Presidency of the Republic gain, if not all, than at least a substantial majority of Polish votes. ... Without casting blame on anyone in

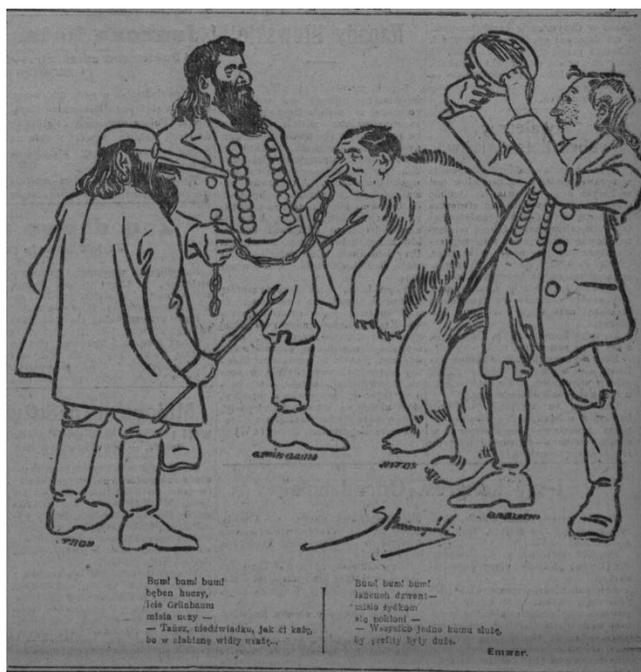
particular, it must be noted ... that the right threw down its gauntlet by choosing Count Maurycy Zamoyski, which is why [Piaŝ] at the last moment put forth the candidacy of Wojciechowski. However, in the fourth vote, this candidate was defeated through the votes of Liberation and the national minorities. ... Piaŝ, as a democratic peasant party, did not find it possible to vote for Count Zamoyski, a representative of the aristocracy and the interests of the greatest landowners. Therefore, Piaŝ's vote for a candidate of the left was not the result of some deal reached with any of the Polish left-wing parties, let alone with the national minorities. Piaŝ ... will continue to stand in defense of the law, and seek a consolidation of the Polish parties on the basis of building a Polish state."⁴⁵

In short, Piaŝ was trying to disassociate itself from having voted for the same candidate as the national minorities—thus implicitly accepting the National Democratic claim that there was something shameful in that very fact. If the National Democrats had chosen a more moderate candidate, the resolution implied, Piaŝ *would* have voted for him. By the resolution's logic, the election of Narutowicz was actually the fault of everyone but Piaŝ! The Polish left and the minorities were guilty of eliminating Wojciechowski, while the National Democrats were guilty of putting forth Zamoyski. It was only this terrible set of circumstances which forced the peasant deputies to temporarily and unwillingly find themselves in the same boat as the national minorities. Piaŝ's claim that finding a "Polish majority" was necessary "because of foreign relations" (*ze względu na zagranicę*) is particularly bizarre, and sounds just as strange in Polish as it does in English.⁴⁶ Resorting to these kinds of justifications, I think, sheds light on the genuine fear of violence which must have gripped many deputies and the desperate predicament the party found itself in.

There are a number of reasons for Piast's lack of backbone. First, the peasant party probably had the weakest backing of any political organization in the city of Warsaw, and no independent force of its own in the "streets." The PPS had a strong and well organized militia. Liberation, though also a rural party, was closely intertwined with the Piłsudczyk movement and could count on its support and the muscle of the POW. Even the Jews had a large population which could perhaps be mobilized in self-defense. The Piast deputies, cut off from their rural supporters and unfamiliar with the big city had no one to protect them, and it is not surprising that many were susceptible to threats of physical violence. Even after the assassination of Narutowicz, Witos was repeatedly warned by friendly National Democratic deputies "not to show his face in the city."⁴⁷

But a more serious reason for the party's panic was the power of the discourse of the "Polish Majority." The attack of the National Democratic press on Piast was relentless. "No communiqués or justifications will change the fact that the peasants with their votes helped to elect the candidate imposed by the Jews as the first president of the Republic of Poland," *Gazeta Warszawska* thundered.⁴⁸ According to Father Lutosławski, writing in *Gazeta Poranna*, "Witos was marching under the command of the Jews." Now, however, Lutosławski continued, "Witos will have to learn that you can betray Poland in league with the Jews, but you cannot rule her against the wishes of the Polish majority."⁴⁹ According to the National Democratic *Kurjer Poznański*, by cooperating with the Jews, Piast "had crossed the Rubicon."⁵⁰

Figure VIII.1 1922 Witos enthralled to the Jews⁵¹



Despite the violence in the streets and Piast's not so gentle "insistence" on his resignation, Narutowicz, by all accounts a mild and gentle man with little thirst for power, showed a surprising strength of character. "I cannot go back," he told Rataj, "that would be giving in to mob rule and would create a terrible precedent."⁵² He also "categorically" refused Witos' "insistent" demands.⁵³

Following meetings with Rataj, "Liberation," and Piast, the new president met with Piłsudski to discuss the transfer of power. Even this meeting did not go smoothly. Narutowicz wanted to extend the period of transition and for Piłsudski to remain in his current position as Head of State for as long as one month. Piłsudski sharply refused this request, insisting that it was necessary to have a clear and unambiguous constitutional settlement in order to stabilize the political situation.⁵⁴ His will prevailed, as it often did. At the end of the day, Narutowicz found the time to return to his work at the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs where, still in his capacity as minister, he signed a trade treaty with Japan, before returning to his temporary residence in the *Łazienki* park palace.

The Battle on Three Crosses Square and the Inauguration

The swearing-in ceremony and the formal transfer of power were planned for Monday, December 11. The three right-wing ChJN clubs made a decision, not without some internal dissent, to boycott the ceremony and to question its validity.⁵⁵ At the same time, the students and other National Democratic sympathizers in the streets received instructions to prevent the president-elect from reaching the National Assembly. It is impossible to determine exactly who made the final decision to deploy the “troops” in this manner, but there is no doubt that it was reached at the highest levels of National Democratic leadership. Indeed, there was very considerable personnel overlap between the National Democratic parliamentary club, the press (which not only stirred up public anger but also carried announcements of meeting points for specific demonstrations), and auxiliary organizations on the street level.

Gazeta Poranna and *Gazeta Warszawska* were owned by National Democrats loyal to Dmowski. Antoni Sadzewicz, the editor of the former, was a ZLN deputy. Zygmunt Wasilewski, who ran the latter, was a close personal friend of Dmowski and a member of the National Democratic inner circle. *Rzeczpospolita* was owned and edited by Stanisław Stroński, the outspoken leader and deputy of the SChN. *Kurjer Warszawski* carried high profile articles by senior ZLN deputy Władysław Rabski. Leading *Rozwój* activists, such as

Tadeusz Dymowski and Konrad Ilski, were *Sejm* deputies representing, respectively, the Christian Democrats and the ZLN. General Haller was a SChN deputy. Father Kazimierz Lutosławski, sophisticated parliamentary deputy, prolific writer for *Gazeta Poranna*, spirited street orator, and rabid anti-Semite was fully engaged on all fronts of the struggle for a “Polish majority.” In sum, communication between the parliamentary leadership and the rank-and-file could travel quickly using a wide variety of channels as well as both personal and institutional networks.

News of a “great” demonstration prior to the swearing-in ceremony was printed in all the major right-wing newspapers. *Rozwój*, for its part, issued the following manifesto:

Jewry, emboldened by its successes to date, has reached for the highest office in Poland. ... The entire national camp should courageously and vigorously look the truth in the face and reject the Jewish-Masonic coup against the dignity and honor of the Polish Nation. ... We call upon those deputies ... who used Jewish support to push through their candidate to return to their senses and turn back from the path which ultimately leads to giving up Poland to the feeding frenzy of the international Jewish-Masonic anonymous great power. ... Come to the great *Rozwój* rally! Long live a Poland free from Jewish influence! Long live a Polish nation liberated from Jewish-Masonic influence!⁵⁶

By December 10, these posters, calling the youths out into the street were plastered all over the city.⁵⁷ News also spread through cafes and among groups of youth. The left, predictably, claimed that much of this was the work of agitators.⁵⁸ In reality, however, the difference between “agitators” and a regular citizens who accepted the NDs’ claims and were outraged by the election of Narutowicz was probably rather blurred.

At any rate, the left, the government, and the police were all well aware of the demonstrations planned for December 11. The government was headed by Jan Nowak, a

holdover from the previous *Sejm* and a colorless moderate conservative whose chief asset appears to have been that he wasn't particularly offensive to anyone. At the end of the day, Nowak phoned his Minister of Interior, Kamiński, who assured him that Monday's demonstrations would be contained and that police would maintain public order. Piłsudski admitted to being distracted with "his own personal troubles and various life dilemmas," presumably related to his departure from power, and not paying enough attention to the violence in the streets.⁵⁹ Some workers requested a half day off work on Monday, in order to participate in possible counter-demonstrations.⁶⁰ Liberation issued a fiery proclamation in which it threatened that "for every right-wing attack in the cities, the people will immediately answer with an attack in the countryside."⁶¹ But overall, the reaction was muted. Even *Robotnik*, the usually militant PPS organ, merely expressed the confidence that "the authorities" will quell further demonstrations.⁶²

The emotional temperature of the right-wing press on the morning of Monday, December 11, the day of the inauguration was, if anything, even higher than on the previous day. "How dare the Jews impose their President upon Poland?" Father Lutosławski asked on the front page of *Gazeta Poranna*. It was a "shameful betrayal," he concluded. This sophisticated priest, social activist, scout-leader, medical doctor, and deputy ended his article with a call to action: "We call the national masses to fulfill their duty, and put all their energy into fighting the Jews in the economic, cultural, and all other realms, and to unite everyone in defense of the rights of the Polish nation."⁶³ But the students, who were the most militant supporters of the nationalist right, had already

been primed for violence, and the decisive confrontation now moved from the press and into the streets.

As we have seen, the authorities were aware that large demonstrations were being planned with the goal of preventing Narutowicz from arriving for the swearing in ceremony. In order to reach the *Sejm* from his residence in Łazienki Park, the president-elect had to travel through nearly half of Warsaw. While police records of these events cannot be located, it appears that the police wanted Narutowicz to travel in an unmarked car, without an escort, along circuitous route, so as to avoid the demonstrators altogether. According to *Kurjer Poranny*, the specific route (Saxon Garden, Jewish quarter, Kierbiedź Bridge, Powiśle St, Książęca or Czerniakowska Sts, down to Wiejska St and the *Sejm*) was leaked to both the press and the demonstrators. In any event, it was rejected by the military authorities, who believed it to be dangerous and overly complicated.⁶⁴ At the last moment, Piłsudski, still “distracted” by personal issues, decided to enlarge the president’s cavalry escort in case of rioting.⁶⁵

Still, it seemed that a crisis might be avoided. The *Sejm* was decorated with flowers for the swearing in ceremony. Large contingents of police, some on horseback, were stationed in front of the *Sejm*, along Wiejska St, Ujazdowskie Ave, as well as on Nowy Świat St, Jerozolimskie Ave, Bracka St, and Książęca St. Meanwhile, ever larger groups of youths began gathering in front of the *Sejm*, on Wiejska St, along Ujazdowskie Ave, and in the Three Crosses Square. Initially the police were able to keep the center of the streets clear, and the demonstrators confined to sidewalks. The headquarters of *Rozwój*, at 2

Żurawia St, acted as a rallying point for the more politically engaged students. There, they were being formed into “detachments” and sent to various other areas to lead the crowds.⁶⁶ The demonstrators “moved in military formation ... and were led by people bearing special insignia; almost all were armed with identical clubs and a large part possessed firearms.”⁶⁷

Despite the large police presence, the situation quickly deteriorated. Acting rather passively, in many places the police quickly found themselves *behind* the lines of the demonstrators. By 11am, the entrance to Wiejska St and the *Sejm* was entirely blocked off by the youths. Deputies who were trying to make their way to the *Sejm* for the swearing-in ceremony had to pass through the line of demonstrators before making contact with the police lines. The youths demanded identity documents from anyone wanting to pass, and reacted appropriately. While right-wing deputies heading to the *Sejm* were “greeted with ovations” and immediately let through, left-wing, Piast, and minority deputies were prevented from passing, taunted, and, one more than one occasion, beaten up.⁶⁸ Many were met with chants of “Jew! Socialist! Peasant deputy!” and attacked. Two Jewish deputies, Rabbi Kowalski and Senator Deutscher, and two peasants, Szydłowski and Cieplak showed up at the *Sejm* with bloody faces.⁶⁹ Jewish journalists were beaten up as well. If the Jews tried to complain to police, the latter would proceed to check their identification documents and pass them on to the students for another beating.⁷⁰ The *Robotnik* correspondent witnessed another journalist having his identification papers examined by a number of students. After poring over the papers, one of the students made the official pronouncement: “Many Jews have Polish last names.” With that one

sentence, the verdict was passed: the hapless journalist was declared to be a Jew and promptly beaten up.⁷¹ Another journalist was beaten up because a “poor quality photo” in his documents prompted the students to label him a Jew.⁷² Foreign ambassadors and dignitaries were also detained. Some like the head of the Italian mission were cheered. Others were insulted—the Japanese envoy had his hat knocked off.⁷³

The epicenter of the demonstrations, however, was the Three Crosses Square. Located less than a five minute walk from the *Sejm*, the square was large enough to hold thousands of demonstrators, and also lay on the route taken by many deputies and senators hoping to attend the swearing in ceremony. The square was so packed with people that many had to stand on the steps of St Alexander’s church. According to subsequent testimony by police experts there were around 15,000 people packed into the square.⁷⁴ Trams had to be steered away from their usual route, and take a detour down Marszałkowska Street. According to an anonymous witness cited by *Robotnik*, the demonstrators used a small candy shop to keep in touch with their headquarters at *Rozwój*. The witness recalled overhearing a phone call made from the shop, in which students at the square advised that “some rabbi had been beaten up” and asked for further instructions as to what to do with him.⁷⁵

While there are no records of Piast or Jewish deputies offering resistance to the attackers, the socialists, used to “running” Warsaw, and in charge of their own well-armed militia were in a different position. One of the most violent episodes of December 11 had its beginnings when senator and elder PPS statesman Bolesław Limanowski, PPS leader

Igancy Daszyński, and leader of the party's Warsaw section Rajmund Jaworowski entered the Three Crosses Square. As someone cried "Daszyński is coming!" the crowd moved in and closed a ring around the three. Jaworowski, a former member of Piłsudski's Combat Organization, with ties to both high level Piłsudczyks and the Warsaw underworld, quickly pulled out a Browning semiautomatic pistol. This momentarily forced the crowd back, and allowed the three to reach a doorway in one of the buildings encircling the square.⁷⁶ Luckily for them, this happened to be a textile shop, where the workers received them well and barricaded the door. Jaworowski managed to sneak out the backdoor and proceeded to get help.⁷⁷

News of the incident quickly travelled around Warsaw. Two PPS deputies, Żuławski and Piotrkowski, decided to leave the *Sejm* and walk out into the street in order to demand the release of Daszyński and Limanowski. Piotrkowski proceeded to "energetically" denounce the demonstrators' tactics. According to *Gazeta Poranna* he called them a bunch of "little shits."⁷⁸ Whatever exact words may have been exchanged, Piotrkowski was struck in the head with a blunt metal object and knocked unconscious. As he was being beaten, police stood idly by with only one, Constable Kossowski, attempting to restrain the attackers.⁷⁹ Piotrkowski was eventually rescued by his comrade Żuławski and with the aid of two policemen dragged back to the *Sejm*, his face covered with blood. He was later transported to a hospital with a serious concussion.⁸⁰

Meanwhile the emotional temperature in the city continued to rise. Kazimierz Chraszczewski, a Piłsudczyk army captain was trying to make his way to the swearing in

ceremony, but found himself unable to cross Ujazdowskie Ave. The way was blocked by thousands of people, mostly high school students. Some were ripping park benches out of nearby Ujazdowski Park, and erecting a makeshift barricade to prevent the president from getting through. Chraszczewski recalled being surrounded by a “roaring” sound of the chanting youth. “Jewish president!” “Mason!” “He’s not a Polish citizen!” were some of the slogans which lodged in his mind. Chraszczewski, dressed in his gala military uniform, was eventually able to make it through the throngs.⁸¹

While students undoubtedly formed the backbone of the protests, middle class and working class Varsovians also actively participated in the demonstrations. Most sources estimate that about half of the people out in the streets were by-standers or curious on-lookers.⁸² However, given the high emotional pitch of the protest, many of these “curious bystanders” would eventually become eager participants. Piłsudski’s wife, Aleksandra, who was also trying to make her way through the city that day, recalled:

I was unable to move in the throng of people. On one side of me was an elderly half deaf peasant woman, who kept asking me what’s going on. On the other, was a fat, enormous servant girl. The latter, all red-faced, shook her whole body and waved her fists in the air, screaming: “Down with Narutowicz! Down with the Jew! ... The Jews will not rule us!” In the end, everyone around me screamed and swore in a similar manner.⁸³

The state of affairs in the city was such that the cowardly premier, Nowak, feigned illness and refused to accompany the president in his carriage, as protocol demanded. He later appeared at the *Sejm* in perfectly good health. At the last minute, the Chief of Protocol, Stefan Przeździecki volunteered to take the premier’s place. According to *Głos*

Prawdy, the change of plans was so sudden and unexpected that Przeździecki had to borrow a top hat.⁸⁴ Narutowicz was fully aware of the situation in the city, but rejected advice to turn back. According to his niece, who was with him at Łazienki Park before he left, he took out his pistol, which he always carried with him, and laid it down on the table so as not to be tempted to use it in self-defense.⁸⁵

Shortly before noon, the president's carriage, accompanied by two platoons of cavalry, left Łazienki Park. Along the entire route, hostile crowds surrounded the carriage, throwing snowballs and sticks at the president. "I remember very well," writes the historian Jerzy Pajewski, "my fifteen year old middle school acquaintance ... telling me with delight how he saw snowballs hitting Narutowicz in the face."⁸⁶ The police stood by passively. At one point the driver of the carriage was struck in the head with a brick. He later admitted that at that moment he wanted to "throw down the reins and escape, leaving the president alone."⁸⁷

At the corner of Ujazdowskie Avenue and Piękna Street where a large barricade made out of park benches was erected, the police fraternized with the demonstrators who, in turn, raised chants in their honor. Police allowed the student militia to stop cars, check their drivers' identity documents, and even throw snowballs at the people inside.⁸⁸ According to *Kurjer Poranny*, shortly after the Minister of Justice Makowski personally drove up to tell the police of the president's imminent arrival, the mounted contingent demonstratively left their post. The footmen remained but though the unit commander

gave orders to remove the barricade, pointing to four officers to carry out the task, they made no attempt to do so and stood idly by.

When the president's carriage finally arrived, the leader of the mounted escort, Rotmistrz Strzelecki, had his horse back into the benches and "with the horse's rear created an opening just large enough for the carriage to get through."⁸⁹ Taking advantage of the fact that the carriage briefly stopped, one of the demonstrators, armed with club, managed to climb up on it and get within striking range of the president-elect.

Narutowicz later told his niece:

The stick had an iron ball at the end. I thought: you're going to kill me just like that? And I looked him in the eyes. He lowered his eyes and the stick.⁹⁰

In the end, the foot police "pointed their bayonets at the demonstrators, only after some of the sticks thrown at the president starting falling on them."⁹¹ Narutowicz later recounted that he could not forget the sight of police officers standing at attention and saluting him, even as they totally ignored the crowd throwing rocks and snowballs.⁹²

The situation inside the *Sejm* reflected the passions raging outside. Agitated deputies from the left, powerless to stop the events in the streets were looking for a way to release their frustration. The radical Liberation deputy Zubowicz "looked for any available National Democrat, ready to beat him up."⁹³ Speaker of the *Sejm*, Rataj, personally had to break up a number of fistfights.⁹⁴ When the unconscious PPS deputy Piotrkowski was brought in from the street, a group of left-wing deputies attempted to break into the ZLN club offices. According to Thugutt, the incident almost ended in a shootout.⁹⁵

Despite his travails in the city, Narutowicz arrived at the *Sejm* no more than half an hour late. His coat still bore the signs of snowballs thrown at him on the way, and there was a visible bump on his head.⁹⁶ The National Assembly was “strange and eerie,” with almost half the deputies absent.⁹⁷ But from the gallery two National Democratic deputies raised heckles, yelling “Jewish king!” before being forcibly ejected by the wardens.⁹⁸ After that, the swearing in ceremony proceeded without incident. According to his supporters, who were the only ones present, Narutowicz, though visibly moved, spoke the words of the oath forcefully and with great dignity. He was greeted by thunderous applause and chants of “Down with fascism!” “Long live Narutowicz!” and “Long live Piłsudski!”⁹⁹

But the violence in the city was still intensifying. The PPS Warsaw regional leader Jaworowski, who managed to escape from the textile shop at Three Crosses Square, eventually made his way to the Regional Workers’ Committee (*Okręgowy Komitet Robotniczy*), as the PPS Warsaw headquarters at Jerozolimskie Ave was called. Many workers who had taken half the day off as a precaution, were now ready to confront the nationalist youths and a “rescue party” was organized with the aim of freeing Limanowski and Daszyński. Around 1:30 pm, a march of workers bearing the red PPS banner made its way down from the Committee building to Three Crosses Square, singing the PPS anthem “Red Standard.” As the march approached the square from the direction of Nowy Świat St, the nationalist youths intoned the rival nationalist anthem “Rota,” and prepared to meet the workers head on.

As the marchers entered Three Crosses Square, shots rang out and the panicked crowd ran for cover into gateways and stores.¹⁰⁰ After the initial volley, the workers and those students who didn't run for cover charged each other. What took place then can only be described as a pitched battle. Most participants fought with "fists and sticks," but "from time to time gunshots could be heard."¹⁰¹ After some fifteen minutes police, who had been observing the scene passively, broke up the fighting by firing into the air. By 2:30pm the square was quiet, with bodies of wounded strewn about. The workers led Daszyński and Limanowski out of their hiding place and, taking them into the middle of their procession, escorted them to the *Sejm*.¹⁰²

But the struggle was far from over—even as the "battle" at Three Crosses Square raged, new detachments of nationalist youth were being organized at *Rozwój*. On the way back from the *Sejm*, the workers exchanged gunfire with both the National Democratic youth and the police. As they retreated down Nowy Świat St, another group of nationalists ambushed them and opened fire. This time, the PPS standard bearer, a worker named Jan Kałuszewski, was killed. The bullet struck him in the back of the head.¹⁰³ Four others were wounded, among them the prominent Piłsudczyk Tadeusz Hołówko, who was shot through the cheek. This time, police did not intervene. With the PPS militia in retreat, a group of some 200 students marched to the offices of *Robotnik*, and started throwing rocks at the windows.¹⁰⁴ They were forced back after shots were fired from inside the building though, this time, without any casualties.¹⁰⁵

In the *Sejm*, with shots from Three Crosses Square resonating in the background, Maciej Rataj attempted to put together a joint resolution of all parliamentary clubs calling for calm. But the National Democrats refused to sign any resolution alongside the national minorities, and demanded the latter's exclusion. The PPS rejected the idea altogether, and so it came to naught.¹⁰⁶ Narutowicz remained trapped in the *Sejm* until an army detachment armed with machine guns cleared the students (and police) from Wiejska Street.¹⁰⁷

While the events at Three Crosses Square were the fulcrum of the protests, and captivated the press, violence directed almost exclusively at Jews permeated the entire city centre. Throughout the city core, groups of youths armed with sticks boarded trams, looking for "people with Semitic features."¹⁰⁸ Anyone identified as a Jew would, at minimum, have his hat knocked off. This introduction would usually be followed by a beating. Windows in the trams could also be smashed for good measure. In one incident, a group of youths boarded Tram 9, at the corner of Trębacka and Krakowskie Przedmieście Sts, and spotted Wilhelm Meyer, an 83-year old German businessman who had the misfortune of looking "like a Jew." Meyer was beaten on the head with sticks, dragged out of the tram, and thrown head-first into a wooden pole. A policeman intervened only once the beating was over, and escorted the bleeding man to hospital.¹⁰⁹

By 4pm, with increasing numbers of workers now having finished work, the PPS was able to put together a larger counter-demonstration. The march began in the working class suburb of Wola and made its way down Bracka, Warecka, Nowy Świat,

Jerozolimskie Ave, and Marszałkowska. The workers' chants targeted "student fascists," especially as they passed the university and General Haller's residence. However, unlike any of the right-wing protests, the PPS march was escorted by heavy police presence.¹¹⁰ As a result, no violence took place.

By 8pm, the city was largely quiet, and most of the deputies were able to leave the *Sejm* without having to fear being attacked. By evening, everyone was gone, except for the Jewish deputies and senators, who still feared attacks by right-wing youth. The orthodox deputies formed a *minyan*, and Rabbi Szapiro led the evening prayers. It was to be the orthodox rabbi's only memorable act in his career as a *Sejm* deputy. Only late at night were the streets quiet enough for the Jewish deputies to make their way home.¹¹¹

The Revolution that Wasn't

The actions, or more specifically inactions, of the police received heavy criticism from the left-wing press. The right-wing press, in turn, praised the police for their "impartiality."¹¹² According to subsequent analysis by experts, the police had more than enough resources deployed to put an end to the demonstrations. Yet, they conspicuously failed to do so. A part of the reason for police inaction was simple incompetence. This was certainly the case with the Minister of Interior, Kamieński, who despite having been well informed hadn't even considered the possibility of taking any precautions against possible violence by the right.¹¹³ Thugutt later said that Kamieński could not be held legally responsible for his inaction since "there is no provision in the criminal code for ... a serious lack of intelligence."¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of assessments by the left and right, combined with reports of police activity from diverse sources, would seem to indicate that the problem went deeper than incompetence. In the first place, as the head of the Warsaw section of the National Police 4th Department (Political Affairs) later testified, police authorities were kept fully apprised of all the planned rallies and demonstrations staged by the National Democrats.¹¹⁵ Indeed, in a number of spots, section commanders took action against the demonstrators. While the latter quickly turned against the police, uttering chants like “Defenders of the Jews!” such initiatives were successful.¹¹⁶ However, section commanders who undertook more energetic actions were quickly reprimanded and even “verbally abused” by their superiors.¹¹⁷

Some police commanders may have thought that a right-wing coup d'état was in the works, and wanted to get on the right side of history. There is also no doubt that many individual officers simply sympathized with the National Democrats and their demands. In fact, the Warsaw police was penetrated by a secret nationalist organization, the *Pogotowie Patryjotów Polskich* (The Polish Patriotis' Emergency or PPP), which was exposed in 1924. Komisarz Henryk Gostyński, who was in charge of the police at Three Crosses Square, was a high ranking PPP member.¹¹⁸ Thus, the inactivity of the police was not simply the result of incompetence but points to its deeper involvement with radical nationalists.

In all respects, the clashes of December 11 appeared to have been a victory for the right and, at the very least, showed its capacity to mobilize the masses. Yet, the

demonstrations failed to achieve any concrete political goals. While they may have scared Piast and Witos, Narutowicz's firm stance ensured that the "March on Rome" would not be successfully copied in Warsaw. The incompetent Interior Minister Kamiński was promptly suspended, and replaced with the capable Ludwik Darowski. The latter suspended a number of police officials, including Warsaw's commander, and proceeded to issue a public communiqué threatening to use the military in the event of further rioting. Late at night, Darowski personally spoke to Jaworowski and explained to him the consequences of any reprisals against the right by the PPS. Whatever he said must have made an impression because, despite having been personally assaulted at Three Crosses Square, Jaworowski spent the morning of December 12 driving around the working class suburbs of Warsaw calling on the workers to remain calm.¹¹⁹

But perhaps equally important factors in the National Democrats' failure to press their advantage were their own internal divisions and lack of resolve. Indeed, after the bloodshed of December 11, many senior National Democratic deputies appeared to have become afraid of the jinn they had let out the bottle. The conservative Speaker of the Senate Wojciech Trąpczyński was shocked by the anarchy in the streets and the inaction of the police. "Two water cannons would have gotten rid of the entire bunch," he remarked, expressing disdain for his more radical followers.¹²⁰ Similarly, Stanisław Głąbiński and Marian Seyda, two senior ND deputies, were "embarrassed by the demonstrations and wanted nothing to do with them."¹²¹ This sentiment was even more

prevalent among the decidedly less radical Christian Democrats, whose representatives eventually met with Narutowicz.

Equally striking is the lack of cohesive leadership. In fact, the admiration so frequently expressed by young Polish nationalists for Mussolini is noteworthy because it underscored what was perhaps their movement's greatest weakness: The Polish right lacked a charismatic leader. The parliamentary leaders Głabiński, Grabski, and Stroński were old fashioned parliamentarians rather than charismatic street tribunes. They were not prepared for, and more importantly didn't really want, a coup d'état. Father Lutosławski, despite his violent demagoguery and vile anti-Semitism, was no revolutionary; in the final reckoning he too was a legalist beholden to the constitution and the rule of law. Other National Democrats active in streets politics, such as *Rozwój* organizers Iłski or Opęchowski, lacked the charisma for national leadership roles. They singularly failed to take the reins, and turn mere riots into a genuine revolution.

Despite the high hopes placed in him, General Haller also failed to assume a leading role in the protests and provide a sense of direction and leadership. While he may have cut a decent figure in uniform, and was able to string together forceful patriotic speeches, Haller's memoirs bring to light a vain man of limited intellectual horizons and leadership abilities. Despite the students' "throwing themselves to his hands," Haller either failed or, as he later claimed, simply didn't want to utilize the crisis as a means to organize a viable movement around his own person, or to advance own his position within the National Democratic movement.¹²²

Perhaps most conspicuous, however, was the silence of the man many considered to be the true leader of the National Democrats—Roman Dmowski. Indeed, reading right-wing newspapers from the stormy days of December 1922, one may justly be convinced that a man named Roman Dmowski had never existed or, at the very least, that he had never been a leading force in the National Democratic movement. According to those who knew him, in years immediately following independence, Dmowski had purposefully removed himself from the public limelight because he believed that “the world was entering into an era of international Jewry’s power.”¹²³ In this situation, he thought, his own presence at the helm in Poland would act to concentrate the enmity of “international Jewry” against the new state. It also appears that he wanted to wait until the leftist revolutionary currents still sweeping through Europe subsided, before making a return to politics.¹²⁴

It would be supremely ironic if Dmowski had chosen not to take a public stance during the orgy of anti-Semitic violence which followed the election of Narutowicz because of his own anti-Semitic paranoia. But whatever the precise causes of Dmowski’s self-imposed exile from politics, which are probably best left to his biographers, the National Democratic leader was conspicuously absent precisely at the very time when the right needed a single figure with the authority to unite it, and harness the anger against the “Jewish president” into a movement with a concrete political vision and program. In the end, a right-wing Piłsudski could not be found and the revolutionary moment, if that was indeed what it was, had slipped away, its energy dissipated in violence against

random “people with Semitic features.” The right was casting about for a Polish Benito Mussolini in vain; hence perhaps the nationalists’ love for the Italian *Duce*.

By the morning of Tuesday, December 12, the violence was largely over. Large contingents of soldiers and police patrolled the streets. The PPS, prevented by Darowski from staging further demonstrations, organized a general strike. There were no trams in the streets and no electricity or water in the city until evening hours. However, as right-wing newspapers reported with satisfaction, the gasworks continued to operate thanks to “Catholic trade unions.”¹²⁵ Outside the university, a small number of students gathered, chanting “It’s time to drop all sentiments and begin an energetic action against the Jews!” However, this small rally failed to attract others and quickly petered out.¹²⁶

Indeed, the National Democratic leadership appeared to have decided that things had gotten out of hand. As Rataj put it, the party leadership had “lost the reins” of the demonstrators and, frightened by the scepter of anarchy, was now attempting to reel its followers back in.¹²⁷ The official communiqué of the ChJN acknowledged that the election had “deeply disturbed the patriotic feelings of the Polish people,” but called for “calm” and an end to the demonstrations.¹²⁸ The Christian Democrats, more moderate than their National Democratic coalition partners, issued their own communiqué in which they went even further in rebuking the demonstrators. The “interests of the state,” they chastised the protestors, were ultimately more important than “slighted national sentiments.”¹²⁹

The right-wing press followed suit, and called for “calm.”¹³⁰ But while virtually all right-wing newspapers called for peace and respect for the law, the emotions of anger, outrage, and hate which had underpinned the demonstrations were continually stoked, in the exact same vein as before. The contrast between the hateful rhetoric and the calls for “calm,” “peace,” or “restraint” could often border on the surreal. The perfect example is provided by the supposedly “moderate” National Democrat and theatre critic, Władysław Rabski, writing in the equally “moderate,” by the standards of the ND press, *Kurjer Warszawski*:

Jesus and Mary! It is as if a lightning bolt pierced the stormy sky and revealed to Polish eyes the horrific larva of the red-bearded Satan. This Satan had the face of one of the [Jewish] senators from Nalewki [Street]. Jesus and Mary! From the deepest depths of the national soul sprang these words, as if we had suddenly seen Poland, a slave again, tied up by the red-bearded one and carried off, like a sheep, to the German market. But he could not lift her by himself. So Piast jumped in and helped him! Jesus and Mary! This was the scream of our consciousness, awakened by a sudden slap in the face and shaken by the coup against Polish pride, Polish law, and the rule of the Polish nation, terrified by the cynicism, stupidity and shamelessness of the leaders of the Polish peasants! Jesus and Mary! The street shook and became red with anger, spontaneously, incalculably, with sorrow in its soul. Peace! I beg of you. Hail to your sacrifice but the demon of anarchy is dangerous.¹³¹

In other words, while the rioters and demonstrators were mildly castigated for spreading “anarchy”, their sentiments and hatreds were fully validated. And even as they somewhat belatedly repudiated violence, the National Democrats congratulated themselves for “turning the attention of Polish society to the goal of international Jewry to gain control of the government in Poland” and pointed out the need for “for systematic warfare for the liberation of our cities, industry, trade, schools, universities, as well as the

hearts and minds of those Polish workers and peasants, who ... serve the foreign elements without even knowing it.”¹³²

Over the next four days, Narutowicz was able to arrange a formal transfer of power from Piłsudski and meet with the leaders of the various political parties, including the Christian Democrats. But while the streets were calm, the discursive attacks on the new president continued unabated. In the press, Narutowicz was called a mere figurehead controlled by the true dictator, Szymon Askenazy, who supposedly used his powers to spread “Jewish-Masonic influence.”¹³³ Perhaps the best known article of the period, penned by Stanisław Stroński in the *Rzeczpospolita* was aptly entitled “The Obstacle.”¹³⁴ According to Stroński, Narutowicz was an “obstacle” thrown in front of the emerging “Polish majority” by Piłsudski who, himself, was too shrewd a politician to risk tarnishing his good name by associating it with the minorities. The object of Piłsudski’s plan, according to Stroński, was to destroy Poland. An article bearing the same message, entitled “The Dam,” appeared in *Gazeta Warszawska* the following day.¹³⁵

At the same time, threats and other unfriendly telegrams continued to pour in to the president’s office. By the end of the week there was thick “stack” of them. Narutowicz was also receiving threatening anonymous phone calls, often utilizing a fake Jewish accent. When he told Piłsudski of these unpleasant occurrences, the latter just laughed—it turned out that he had been periodically exposed to similar incidents through the entire duration of his tenure as Head of State.¹³⁶ “The lice come out of everywhere,” when you involve yourself in “labor for the nation,” he told Narutowicz. But, according to

Piłsudski, Narutowicz could not accept the “dirt” of Polish politics. “These people are not Europeans!” he said of the National Democrats and their sympathizers, “they preferred living with someone else’s boots on their faces.”¹³⁷ But if Narutowicz was deeply wounded by the continued attacks in the press, he didn’t let this affect his political activity. During the last days of his life he continued to negotiate with various parties and politicians, attempting to find the basis for a stable government.¹³⁸

Murder

The events surrounding the actual murder of Poland’s first president are fairly well known, largely because the narrative is extremely straightforward. On the morning of December 16, Narutowicz met with his friend, the former Prime Minister Leopold Skulski. The two discussed plans for a hunting trip, which was their shared passion. However, at the end of the visit, as if touched by some premonition, Narutowicz asked Skulski to take care of his teenage children if anything were to happen to him.¹³⁹ Following the meeting, the president was scheduled to meet with Cardinal Kakowski at 11am. However, the visit was delayed due to the arrival of a telegram with a plea for pardon from a convicted murderer facing the death penalty. The president quickly signed the appeal and spared the man’s life – it was to be his last political act.¹⁴⁰

After a half hour chat with the Cardinal, Narutowicz hurried to the *Zachęta* building to preside over the opening of Poland’s most important annual fine art exhibition—a task traditionally carried out by Piłsudski. A number of ministers, foreign diplomats, famous artists, and other dignitaries were already in attendance, waiting in the

lobby of the *Zachęta* building. The president ceremonially cut the ribbon and, with Premier Nowak at his right and the director of *Zachęta* at his left, entered the first room of the exhibition. Suddenly, as Narutowicz stopped to take a closer look at a painting, Eligiusz Niewiadomski, one of the artists present, approached him from the back and quickly fired three shots at point blank range.

Another painter, who stood right next to Narutowicz recalled his last moments:

I looked at the president, and noticed that he is looking at me with a surprised expression and swaying on his feet. I tried to support him, together with [Chief of Protocol] Stefan Przeździecki. Suddenly he fell on me. I dragged him to a couch but it was too short, so we had to lay him down on the floor. His eyes were open. He was looking at us, and, slowly and silently, leaving us.¹⁴¹

The gun was quickly pried from Niewiadomski's hands, but the murderer did not resist. "I will not hurt anyone else!" he proclaimed.

The gallery erupted into chaos, as a crowd of guests ran downstairs and out of the building. Individual reactions differed however. Julian Tuwim, who later wrote a beautiful poem about the murder, had to be escorted out of the gallery sobbing uncontrollably. General Haller, on the other hand, continued his tour of the gallery as if nothing had happened.¹⁴² Cardinal Kakowski, who was just arriving at the doors of the *Zachęta* building, abruptly turned his carriage around and returned to his residence without entering the building. Amidst all the turmoil, Niewiadomski was left unguarded in one of the rooms. But despite this, he made no attempt to escape. He merely sat there motionless, with his lips set, legs crossed, and an impassive expression on his face.¹⁴³ His

goal, which would soon become apparent, was to save Poland from the tyranny of the Jews.

Gabriel Narutowicz, the first president of Poland, was buried on December 19, 1922, his body laid to rest in the catacombs of the Cathedral of St. John. The funeral mass was presided over by Cardinal Kakowski. The entire government, Marshals of the *Sejm* and Senate, and numerous generals and diplomats were in attendance. Outside, the streets were lined with columns of infantry. The funeral procession was joined by members of numerous cultural organizations and groups of workers, bearing the banners of their trade unions. Peasants, whose traditional costumes represented lands from all over Poland, stood out in the crowd.¹⁴⁴ While the Post-Secondary School of Agriculture and Forestry sent an official delegation to the funeral, the conspicuous absence of official student delegations from the University of Warsaw and the Warsaw Polytechnic was noted by observers.¹⁴⁵ National Democratic luminaries Głębiński, Dubanowicz, and Stroński, followed the coffin in silence.¹⁴⁶ As Stanisław Thugutt recalled:

The day of Narutowicz's funeral was terrible. The weather was so gloomy and misty that even at noon it was dark. On the sidewalks, from the Belweder to the Royal Castle, an impassive, an unfathomable crowd lined the streets, and it was impossible to guess what was hiding under that wall of silence.¹⁴⁷

Indeed, the question of what the Poles were thinking in the wake of the tragedy was an important one for the future of the country. On the one hand, it seemed possible that the terrible and senseless murder would shock the National Democrats and their sympathizers, and prompt them to re-examine the rhetoric which, it seemed clear to almost everyone, played at least some part in the murder. Perhaps the murder would even

lead to a new spirit of moderation and some kind of reconciliation between the highly polarized left and right. Or it could lead the Poles as a whole to reflect more deeply on the discourse of hatred propounded by the National Democrats and to shift their allegiance to other parties. However, as we will see in the next chapter, such hopes were quickly dashed.

¹ Pajewski, *Gabriel Narutowicz*, 141–142.

² “Manifestacje z powodu wyborów,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 10, 1922.

³ This reputation was universal and even Haller in his memoirs sheepishly admits that Jews were particularly scared of his soldiers, even as he tries to salvage their reputation and refute the charges of complicity in pogroms leveled against his units. Józef Haller, *Pamiętniki: Z wyborem dokumentów i zdjęć* (London: Veritas, 1964), 209–210.

⁴ The right was poorly represented at the highest levels of the Polish military which, it must be remembered, was largely the handiwork of Piłsudski. Moreover, since the National Democrats were opposed to the armed struggle for independence, none of their leaders had any military experience. In contrast, the left had a number of high profile military men, not only Piłsudczyks like Kazimierz Sosnkowski or Edward Rydz-Śmigły, but also the Władysław Sikorski, probably the greatest military mind of the Second Republic. While the latter would soon fall out with Piłsudski, their disagreement concerned personal ambitions. During the early 1920s, Sikorski firmly opposed the right and, as subsequent events would show, he was certainly closer to the Piłsudczyks than to the National Democrats. Besides Haller, the only high profile right-wing general was Dowbor-Muśnicki. However, he had lost much political capital when he refused to take an important command post during the Polish-Soviet War and remained alienated from both the army and politics until his death.

⁵ “Manifestacje z powodu wyborów,” *Gazeta Poranna*, December 10, 1922.

⁶ “Manifestacje z powodu wyborów.”

⁷ “Manifestacje z powodu rezultatu wyborów,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 10, 1922.

⁸ “Manifestacje z powodu wyborów.”

⁹ “Manifestacje z powodu wyborów.”

¹⁰ Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 56.

¹¹ KRMSW 297/IV t. 4, k. 547.

¹² Stanisław Stroński, “Ich Prezydent,” *Rzeczpospolita*, December 10, 1922.

¹³ Stanisław Stroński, “Ich Prezydent,” *Rzeczpospolita*, December 10, 1922.

¹⁴ “Złowróźbne zwycięstwo,” *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 10, 1922.

¹⁵ “Wybór Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 10, 1922.

¹⁶ “Gabryel Narutowicz,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 10, 1922.

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- ¹⁷ “Zamoyski-Narutowicz,” *Gazeta Poranna*, December 10, 1922.
- ¹⁸ “Zwyczajstwo nad Polską,” *Gazeta Poranna*, December 10, 1922.
- ¹⁹ “Wielki wiec,” *Gazeta Poranna*, December 10, 1922.
- ²⁰ “Rodacy,” *Gazeta Poranna*, December 10, 1922.
- ²¹ “Oświadczenie Chrz. Zw. Jedn. Nar.,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 10, 1922.
- ²² “Demonstracje uliczne Chjeny,” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 11, 1922.
- ²³ “Warszawa po wyborze prezydenta,” *Gazeta Poranna*, December 11, 1922.
- ²⁴ “Warszawa po wyborze prezydenta.” In his memoirs, Haller claims that he had nothing to do with the demonstrations and that he was falsely accused of making an anti-Semitic speech.” However, his version of events is supported neither by the left nor the right-wing press. See Haller, *Pamiętniki*, 234.
- ²⁵ The Polish terms were “Hańba!” and “Precz!”
- ²⁶ “Warszawa po wyborze prezydenta,” *Gazeta Poranna* December 11, 1922.
- ²⁷ Most states did not yet have embassies in Poland.
- ²⁸ “Prezydent z łaski Żydów i Niemców,” *Kurjer Poznański*, December 13, 1922.
- ²⁹ The meaning of the young nationalists’ admiration for Mussolini will be discussed later in the chapter.
- ³⁰ “Winowajcy,” *Głos Prawdy*, December 16, 1922, 761.
- ³¹ Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 600.
- ³² “Winowajcy,” 761.
- ³³ “Wiec w Rozwoju,” in *Gabrjel Narutowicz pierwszy Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej: Księga pamiątkowa* (Warszawa: Komitet Uczczenia Pierwszego Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej śp. Gabrjela Narutowicza, 1925), 302.
- ³⁴ “Demonstracje uliczne Chjeny,” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 11, 1922.
- ³⁵ “Demonstracje uliczne Chjeny.”
- ³⁶ Bernard Singer, “Blok mniejszości narodowych,” *Nasz Przegląd*, December 17, 1922 Quoted in Singer, *Od Witosza do Ślawka*, 113.
- ³⁷ “Zajścia na ulicy,” *Kurjer Polski*, December 11, 1922.
- ³⁸ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 124.
- ³⁹ “Zajścia na ulicach,” *Kurjer Polski* December 11, 1922.
- ⁴⁰ “Zamach na praworządność i konstytucję,” *Robotnik*, December 11, 1922.
- ⁴¹ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 123.
- ⁴² “Przebieg dnia wczorajszego,” *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 11, 1922. This version of events finds no corroboration in Rataj’s memoirs. Nevertheless, it is not impossible, given the panic which seized many Piast deputies, that Rataj would have suggested such a solution.
- ⁴³ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 31.
- ⁴⁴ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 31.
- ⁴⁵ “Rezolucja PSL,” *Kurjer Poranny* December 11, 1922.
- ⁴⁶ Indeed, as Tadeusz Hołówko observed, “in any normal state with a higher level of culture ... the fact that the minorities voted for Narutowicz would have been utilized in foreign relations to show that the minorities want to play a constructive role in the life of

the Polish state and share the responsibility for its fate.” Hołówko, *Prezydent Gabrjel Narutowicz*, 153.

⁴⁷ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 32.

⁴⁸ “Po wyborze prezydenta,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 11, 1922.

⁴⁹ “Po wyborze prezydenta,” *Gazeta Warszawska*.

⁵⁰ “Migawki Sejmowe,” *Kurjer Poznański*, December 12, 1922. While it is impossible to fully substantiate this claim here, in Chapter X I will show that Piast’s actions over the course of the next year evinced a new respect for the doctrine of the Polish majority. This respect was not simply tactical but, as we will see, many of the party’s deputies seem to have come to believe in, and internalized the National Democratic discourse. In fact, Piast did absolutely everything in its power to distance itself from Narutowicz, even when the threat of physical violence had receded and the right found itself on the defensive.

⁵¹ *Gazeta Poranna*, December 12, 1922.

⁵² Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 123.

⁵³ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 31. Witos claims that he “knew” Narutowicz was supported in his categorical refusal to resign by “other powers,” against which Witos himself was “powerless.” What were these “other powers?” It seems there are two possibilities. One the one hand, Witos could have been referring to the Piłsudczyks and the mafia-like structures of former Legionaires and POW members who, indeed, tried to steer political life in accordance with Piłsudski’s directives. However, the cryptic and conspiratorial tone of Witos’ utterance is strikingly similar to many National Democratic claims about the Jews, who were often referred to as a “secret” or “anonymous” power. Therefore, Witos may have also been referring to the Jews, and their supposed control of Poland’s political life. It would be a supreme irony if Witos who had in fact been the ultimate kingmaker in the contest between Narutowicz and Zamoyski, attributed the former’s victory to some mysterious Jewish conspiracy, rather than to the actions of his own party. I suspect that Witos was too intelligent a politician to believe such nonsense. But it is also possible that he may have mentioned the “other powers” in order to justify his own cooperation with the minorities against the candidate of the “Polish majority.” Clearly, the charge of having been a traitor to the “Polish majority” still stung even decades after the event itself.

⁵⁴ Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 55.

⁵⁵ According to *Kurjer Polski*, this debate pitted the “conservative” against the “nationalist” wings of the ChJN, which corresponded roughly though not exactly to the SChN and ZLN. It was the latter who carried the day. “Wczorajsze obrady klubów,” *Kurjer Polski* December 11, 1922.

⁵⁶ “Manifest Rozwoju,” in *Gabrjel Narutowicz pierwszy Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej: Księga pamiątkowa* (Warszawa: Komitet Uczczenia Pierwszego Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej śp. Gabrjela Narutowicza, 1925), 302–303.

⁵⁷ “Zajścia na ulicach,” *Kurjer Polski* December 11, 1922.

⁵⁸ “Agitacja Chjeny wśród publiczności,” *Kurjer Poranny* December 11, 1922.

⁵⁹ Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 55. While Piłsudski does not indicate what these were, it would appear that he was preparing himself for an exit from

public life, and was not happy about the direction Poland was headed in. Certainly more energetic action on his part would have made the events of December 11 impossible, and his uncharacteristic failure to act must be seen as yet another contingent factor which contributed to making the crisis more severe than it would otherwise have been.

⁶⁰ “Marszałek Sejmu i kluby wobec demonstracji,” *Kurjer Poranny* December 11, 1922.

⁶¹ “Komunikat PSL ‘Wyzwolenie,’” *Kurjer Polski*, December 11, 1922.

⁶² “Zamach na praworządność i konstytucję,” *Robotnik*, December 11, 1922.

⁶³ Kazimierz Lutosławski, “Po wyborze,” *Gazeta Poranna*, December 11, 1922.

⁶⁴ “Przebieg zajść wczorajszych,” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 12, 1922.

⁶⁵ Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 55.

⁶⁶ “Uwolnienie towarzyszy Limanowskiego i Daszyńskiego,” *Robotnik*, December 12, 1922.

⁶⁷ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 6.

⁶⁸ “Dzień wczorajszy w świetle faktów,” *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 12, 1922.

⁶⁹ “Zbiórka band faszystowskich,” *Robotnik*, December 12, 1922; Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 86.

⁷⁰ Bernard Singer, “Gwardia Republikańska na ulicach Warszawy,” *Nasz Przegląd*, December 18, 1922, Quoted in Singer, *Od Witosa do Ślawnka*, 118.

⁷¹ “Echa chijieńskiego zamachu,” *Robotnik*, December 13, 1922.

⁷² “Ex-komendant policji Sikorski przed sądem,” *Robotnik*, April 17, 1923.

⁷³ There is no indication for why it was the Japanese envoy who was attacked, but old fashioned racism seems like the most likely culprit. “Burzliwy dzień w stolicy,” *Kurjer Polski* December 12, 1922.

⁷⁴ “Ex-komendant policji Sikorski przed sądem.”

⁷⁵ “Zbiórka band faszystowskich,” *Robotnik*, December 12, 1922.

⁷⁶ The exact address was 10 Plac Trzech Krzyży.

⁷⁷ “Zbiórka band faszystowskich.” This relation is confirmed by the rightwing papers.

⁷⁸ The Polish word is “szczeniak,” which literally translates as “pup.” Its meaning, however, is closer to the English “brat,” but much more insulting.

⁷⁹ “Przebieg zajść wczorajszych,” *Kurjer Poranny* December 12, 1922.

⁸⁰ “Zbiórka band faszystowskich,” *Robotnik* December 12, 1922.

⁸¹ Tadeusz Caspaeri-Chraszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, BN sygn. 15537 II, 80.

⁸² “Dzień swawoli ulicznej i tryumfu praw państwa,” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 12, 1922.

⁸³ Apparently, without identifying herself, Piłsudska attempted to explain that she knew the Narutowicz family well and that none of them had Jewish roots, but this had no discernible effects on anyone in the crowd. Aleksandra Piłsudska, *Wspomnienia* (London: Gryf, 1960), 262–263.

⁸⁴ “Pożyczony cylinder,” *Głos Prawdy*, December 16, 1922, 729.

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- ⁸⁵ Zofia Kodisówna, "Wspomnienie," in *Gabrjel Narutowicz pierwszy Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej: Księga pamiątkowa* (Warszawa: Komitet Uczczenia Pierwszego Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej śp. Gabrijela Narutowicza, 1925), 230.
- ⁸⁶ Pajewski, *Gabriel Narutowicz*, 154.
- ⁸⁷ "Ex-komendant policji Sikorski przed sądem."
- ⁸⁸ "Przejazd prezydenta Narutowicza," *Robotnik*, December 12, 1922
- ⁸⁹ "Dzień swawoli ulicznej i tryumfu praw państwa."
- ⁹⁰ Kodisówna, "Gabriel Narutowicz," 230.
- ⁹¹ "Dzień swawoli ulicznej i tryumfu praw państwa."
- ⁹² Hołówko, *Prezydent Gabrijel Narutowicz*, 171.
- ⁹³ Singer, "Gwardia republikańska na ulicach Warszawy."
- ⁹⁴ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 125.
- ⁹⁵ "Zaprzysiężenie prezydenta," *Kurjer Warszawski* December 11, 1922; Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 86.
- ⁹⁶ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 238; Kodisówna, "Gabriel Narutowicz," 230.
- ⁹⁷ Thugutt, "Przyczynek do historii pierwszego Zgromadzenia Narodowego," 86.
- ⁹⁸ "Dzień swawoli ulicznej i tryumfu praw państwa," *Kurjer Poranny*, December 12, 1922.
- ⁹⁹ "Zaprzysiężenie prezydenta," *Gazeta Poranna*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹⁰⁰ Predictably, the two sides blamed each other for firing first, and it is impossible to ascertain which account is true. However, in other respects, the accounts provided by right and left-wing papers are virtually identical. "Dzień wczorajszy w świetle faktów," *Kurjer Warszawski* December 12, 1922; "Uwolnienie towarzyszy Limowskiego i Daszyńskiego," *Robotnik*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹⁰¹ "Dzień wczorajszy w świetle faktów; "Uwolnienie towarzyszy Limowskiego i Daszyńskiego."
- ¹⁰² "Dzień wczorajszy w świetle faktów; "Uwolnienie towarzyszy Limowskiego i Daszyńskiego."
- ¹⁰³ "Echa chijeńskiego zamachu," *Robotnik*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹⁰⁴ "Uwolnienie towarzyszy Limowskiego i Daszyńskiego."
- ¹⁰⁵ "Wczorajsze zajścia," *Gazeta Poranna*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹⁰⁶ "Przebieg zaś wczorajszych," *Kurjer Poranny*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹⁰⁷ "Wczorajsze zajścia," *Gazeta Poranna*, December 12, 1922; Jan Jacyna, *W wolnej Polsce: Przeżycia: 1918-1923* (Warszawa: Wolnicki, 1927), 141.
- ¹⁰⁸ "Burzliwy dzień w stolicy" *Kurjer Polski*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹⁰⁹ "Burzliwy dzień w stolicy."
- ¹¹⁰ "Żywiołowa manifestacja robotników," *Robotnik*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹¹¹ Singer, "Gwardia republikańska na ulicach Warszawy."
- ¹¹² "Dzień wczorajszy w świetle faktów," *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹¹³ "Bezczynność policji wobec zamachu na Zgromadzenie Narodowe," *Kurjer Polski*, April 19, 1923.
- ¹¹⁴ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 11.
- ¹¹⁵ "Bezczynność policji wobec zamachu na Zgromadzenie Narodowe."

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- ¹¹⁶ “Bezczynność policji wobec zamachu na Zgromadzenie Narodowe.”
- ¹¹⁷ “Ex-komendant policji Sikorski przed sądem.”
- ¹¹⁸ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 238.
- ¹¹⁹ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 126.
- ¹²⁰ “Przebieg zajęć wczorajszych,” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹²¹ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 126.
- ¹²² Haller, *Pamiętniki*, 235.
- ¹²³ Stanisław Grabski, *Pamiętniki* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1989), 132; Kozicki, *Pamiętnik*, 470.
- ¹²⁴ Wapiński, *Roman Dmowski*, 282–283. Mariusz Kułakowski, ed., *Roman Dmowski w świetle listów i wspomnień*, vol. 2 (Londyn: Gryf Publications, 1968), 148.
- ¹²⁵ “Nieudany strajk,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹²⁶ “Przebieg dnia wczorajszego,” *Kurjer Poranny* December 13, 1922.
- ¹²⁷ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 126.
- ¹²⁸ “Odezwa Chrz. Związku Jedności Narodowej,” *Gazeta Poranna*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹²⁹ “Odezwa Chrześcijańskiej demokracji,” *Gazeta Poranna* December 12, 1922.
- ¹³⁰ “Spokoju!” *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹³¹ “Jezus Marja!” *Kurjer Warszawski*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹³² “Co dalej?” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 12, 1922.
- ¹³³ “Smutny bilans,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 13, 1922.
- ¹³⁴ Stanisław Stroński, “Zawada,” *Rzeczpospolita* December 14, 1922.
- ¹³⁵ “Zapora,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 15, 1922.
- ¹³⁶ Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 56.
- ¹³⁷ Piłsudski, “Wspomnienia o Gabrielu Narutowiczu,” 56.
- ¹³⁸ These negotiations will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.
- ¹³⁹ Narutowicz’s wife, Ewa, had passed away in Switzerland.
- ¹⁴⁰ “Ostatni akt państwowy prezydenta,” *Kurjer Polski*, December 17, 1922.
- ¹⁴¹ Jan Skotnicki, *Przy sztalugach i przy biurku: wspomnienia* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1957), 209–214. For a corroborating account of the president’s final moments see: Kazimiera Hłakiewiczówna, “List o zabójstwie,” *Akta W. Grabskiego*.
- ¹⁴² Kazimierz Lasocki, “Pamiętniki,” BN microfilm 6484, 540.
- ¹⁴³ Lasocki, “Pamiętniki.”
- ¹⁴⁴ Pajewski, *Gabriel Narutowicz*, 176.
- ¹⁴⁵ “Eksportacja zwłok ś.p. Prezydenta Gabrjela Narutowicza z Belwederu do Zamku królewskiego,” *Polska Zbrojna* December 20, 1922.
- ¹⁴⁶ Kazimierz Rudnicki, *Wspomnienia prokuratora* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1957), 166.
- ¹⁴⁷ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 88.

CHAPTER IX

The Murder and the Unrepentant Right

Despite having been so vocal in their opposition to the illegitimate “Jewish President,” the National Democrats did not attempt to utilize the murder in order to stage another bid for power. Quite the opposite, the initial reaction of the right-wing press appeared to be outright panic. Writing in *Mysł Narodowa*, Adolf Nowaczyński explicitly sought to refute charges made by the left and the minorities, both of which believed that the murder was a long term political victory for them. In his article Nowaczyński cited, Apolinary Hartglas, a leader of the Zionists, who wrote:

The president of Poland fell. But along with him fell the *Endecja* which revealed to the world its true, disgusting face. The idea of the [civic] state will step over the dead body of the ND, and continue to flourish.¹

The same sentiments were expressed at an important socialist rally by the PPS leader, Ignacy Daszyński, who argued that by murdering the president the National Democrats had “committed suicide.”²

The primary strategy espoused by writers like Nowaczyński in order to refute these charges was to distance themselves from Niewiadomski and to portray the murderer as a mentally unbalanced renegade who had nothing to do with them. “The madman,” wrote Nowaczyński, “who committed this heinous murder did the worst favor and the most terrible harm to the ideals and interests of the [National Democratic] movement, which

in a moment of failure of all his mental faculties, he may have thought he was trying to help.”³ In sum, Nowaczyński pleaded that Niewiadomski not be taken as a representative of the National Democratic movement as a whole.

The Madman

Indeed, in the first few days, all right-wing journalists appeared to be doing absolutely everything in their power in order to disassociate themselves from the murder and its perpetrator. Their condemnation of Niewiadomski was as scathing as it was unanimous. *Gazeta Warszawska* proclaimed that all Poles were “deeply touched by the heinous assassination.”⁴ Similarly, Stanisław Stroński who had so recently branded Narutowicz as “their president” now claimed him for the entire nation. “Today, the whole nation sees in the murdered president of the Republic not a representative of their own or the enemy political camp,” he wrote in the *Rzeczpospolita* in a stunning reversal of his earlier position, “but a representative of the state and, even more so, the victim of a crime which calls for universal condemnation.”⁵

Whether the sense of outrage expressed by right-wing publicists like Stroński was sincere or not may be debated, but there is no doubt fear of retribution from the left played at least some role in their initial reaction to the murder. Left-wing newspapers were adamant in their claims that Niewiadomski was doing nothing more than acting out the calls of the right-wing publicists, and that the latter bore true responsibility for the murder. “We will not stop talking about this,” wrote Stanisław Posner in *Robotnik*, “we

will not let you forget that you are the guilty ones ...”⁶ Meanwhile, in *Kurjer Poranny* Piast deputy and Piłsudczyk Antoni Anusz demanded that it was not the “blind instrument” but the “hand which directed it,” which deserved punishment for the crime.⁷

To deflect criticism of this sort, *Rzeczpospolita* expressed the hope that the “authorities” will lead a thorough investigation into the crime and reject the temptation to exploit it for political purposes.⁸ *Gazeta Warszawska* also immediately attempted to distance itself from Eligiusz Niewiadomski, “a man whose state of mental health had been dubious for a long time.”⁹ There was also a concerted effort to show that Niewiadomski was not to be identified with the National Democratic movement. *Gazeta Warszawska* pointed out he had once had a physical altercation with Antoni Sadzewicz, the editor of the fellow National Democratic newspaper *Gazeta Poranna*, in order to show that he should not be considered a National Democrat.¹⁰

The right-wing press was correct on two accounts. First, contrary to what most of Narutowicz’s supporters initially assumed, it soon became clear that Niewiadomski acted alone and was not linked to a wider right-wing conspiracy.¹¹ Secondly, he was not a member of any of the National Democratic parties or organizations. While for the purposes of this dissertation Niewiadomski is interesting mainly insofar as his actions and character were evaluated, interpreted, and judged by other Poles, it is nevertheless important to briefly consider the trajectory of his life.

Though Niewiadomski was not actively involved in politics, he cannot be described as being unknown. In fact, the man who shook the very foundations of the

Second Republic had enjoyed a distinguished career as a painter and art critic.

Niewiadomski was born in Warsaw in 1869. His mother died when he was two years old, and thereafter he was raised by his older sister Cecylia. After finishing high school, he studied art in Warsaw before attending the St Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts in 1890. By all accounts he was a distinguished student and in 1892 he won a government fellowship to continue his studies, as well as a number of other prizes. In 1895 he spent a year in Paris studying fine arts and exhibiting his work. At that point, according to his own account, he strongly sympathized with socialism.¹²

Upon returning to Warsaw he continued painting, taught technical drawing at the Polytechnic, and became involved in art criticism, writing reviews for influential publications like *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* and *Kurjer Warszawski*. Like many painters of his day, Niewiadomski became an avid mountaineer. He hiked in the Tatra Mountains and painted numerous mountain landscapes. In 1898 he married Maria Natalia de Tilly. His son, Stefan was born in 1900, and daughter, Anna, in 1902.

Niewiadomski's political views continued to move towards nationalism, and in 1897 he joined the National League. Returning from his trips to the Tatra mountains, he would smuggle issues of illegal National Democratic publications, *Polak* and *Przegląd Wszechpolski*, into Russian Poland. In 1900 he became involved in organizing the *Towarzystwo Oświaty Narodowej* (Association for National Education), a secret organization created by the National League in order spread its ideas among workers and peasants. Thus, in many respects, Niewiadomski's political involvement mirrored that of

many of other National Democratic activists who would later rise to leading positions in the movement.

But this political trajectory was suddenly derailed. On the night of April 2, 1901 Niewiadomski was arrested by the Tsarist secret police, after issues of National Democratic publications were found during a search of his apartment. He spent a few days in the Pawiak prison, and then four months at the Warsaw Citadel. For many Polish political activists, especially though not exclusively among the Patriotic Left, time in Russian prison was a constant occupational hazard. Yet, this relatively brief contact with the Russian penal system seems to have had a powerful effect on Niewiadomski. Although he was released after a relatively short time for lack of evidence, Niewiadomski immediately resigned from the National League. In fact, for all appearances he gave up political activity altogether. From 1901 until 1918, he continued to teach, paint, and write. During this period he became involved in a number of artistic and personal controversies and earned a reputation for being touchy and quick to anger. But, until Poland regained its independence, he was never again involved in politics.

In 1918, he played no role in the struggle for independence. Nor did he rejoin the National Democratic movement after the latter had been achieved. In March 1918, he secured a position as a civil servant with the Ministry of Religious Confessions and Public Education (*Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświaty Publicznej*) and continued to work as a civil servant. During the Polish-Soviet War he volunteered to join the army, and received a position in the Second Bureau of the General Staff, which dealt with counter-

intelligence. He promptly resigned from his position because, as claimed at his trial, he was shocked by the Second Department's incompetence and inability to deal with subversive communist activity.¹³ He was then transferred to a reserve infantry formation (5th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Reserve Company in Chełm) and, upon his own request, sent to the front.

Following the end of hostilities, he returned to a position at the Ministry of Culture and Arts, but resigned in November of 1921 when funds for his department were cut, and returned to teaching. Again, he did not become involved in the National Democratic movement or in any other form of political activity. As an active and well known painter, and a member of the *Zachęta* society, he had no problems gaining access to the exhibition where he would commit the fateful murder.

Therefore, the right's disavowals of Niewiadomski could appear to be credible. He had not belonged to the National League or any of its affiliates since 1901, and had a reputation for being touchy and quick to anger. But while one might have expected the murder to provide an opportunity for the right to moderate some of its more extreme claims, especially those concerning the supposedly "illegitimate" nature of Narutowicz's election, this was not to be the case.

In fact, the image of Niewiadomski as a "madman," which proliferated in the right-wing press in the first days following the assassination, would soon undergo a profound transformation. Before the mechanics of this process are discussed, it is necessary to frame it in its political context. Indeed, as I have tried to argue, discursive

transformations cannot be understood without reference to political events. The rhetorical transformation of Niewiadomski from a “madman” to a hero of the nationalist right must also be analyzed in this broader context.

The panic which appeared to have gripped many National Democratic writers after the murder of Narutowicz had a solid grounding in reality. The assassination had come at a particularly sensitive time. The previous government, headed by Premier Nowak, had already offered its resignation on December 14. The new Premier, former Interior Minister Ludwik Darowski, had not yet formally assumed his post. As news of the assassination spread through the city, the streets became empty and quiet. People, it seems, did not know what would happen next: How would the left react to the murder? For a number of days persistent rumors that other important political figures had been murdered continued to circulate around the capital.¹⁴ The administration and bureaucracy were thrown into utter disarray. A group of young but influential Piłsudczyks—Miedziński, Matuszewski, Koc and others, met at the General Staff to discuss the situation.

Miedziński recalls:

After numerous attempts to make contact by phone, we realized that the state institutions had ceased to function. There was no one at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, or the State Police Headquarters. We found out that no instructions [on how to deal with the crisis] had been issued by anyone to the provincial authorities, diplomatic missions, or the Polish Telegraph Agency. The government had ceased to function... We sent a few officers to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, and the State Police Headquarters. ... We provided everyone with information about what had happened and assured them that we were in full control of the situation. No one asked us about our credentials – everyone took our actions as natural.¹⁵

According to Janusz Pajewski, for a few hours following the assassination “power lay in the street.”¹⁶ And there was certainly a chance that “the street” would seize power. At a stormy meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Warsaw PPS, Rajmund Jaworowski, head of the party’s Warsaw section, announced plans to lead a march of workers into the city to take revenge on the right and “kill the people responsible for the murder.”¹⁷ Jaworowski, whom we will remember as the organizer of the PPS “rescue party” which engaged in a shoot with National Democratic students at Three Crosses’ Square on December 11, was certainly the man to lead such an undertaking. A devoted Piłsudczyk, former member of the *Organizacja Bojowa* (Military Organization) of the PPS, and an intelligence officer in the Legions, he was a “half-idealist half gangster,” who ran the Warsaw PPS like a personal fief.¹⁸ Jaworowski was not only able to quickly mobilize large numbers of workers but, through his personal networks of patronage, had access to many organized criminal groups in the Warsaw underworld. According to Adam Pragier, who was intimately familiar with the Warsaw PPS organization, Jaworowski would not have proceeded with this initiative without direct backing from Piłsudski.¹⁹ In fact, while it is impossible to fully verify the truth of this assertion, it seems quite likely that while Piłsudski did not want to engineer a coup himself, he was hoping that his followers would arrange one for him, and that he would be able to seize power without getting his own hands bloody.²⁰

The bloodletting which would inevitably have followed was stopped by the national leader of the PPS, Ignacy Daszyński. Daszyński, an excellent speaker and a sophisticated veteran of the Austrian parliament, represented a very different political

tradition from Jaworowski's violent and conspiratorial past. Having learned of Jaworowski's plans, Daszyński followed him to the Central Executive meeting in order to bring them to naught. At the meeting, the socialist leader gave a "fantastic speech" arguing that the National Democrats had effectively committed "political suicide" and that inflicting violent punishment on them would amount to "turning them into martyrs." At the same time, Daszyński threatened to bring down the full measure of party discipline against any individuals who disobeyed him. In the end, Daszyński's mixture of "rhetorical magic" and threats prevailed and the Warsaw organization reluctantly followed his lead. Still, according to Pobóg-Malinowski, "working class anger continued to simmer in the suburbs."²¹

Piłsudczyks from the former POW, which now constituted an informal and influential network, also made contingency plans for an armed showdown with the right. According to Tadeusz Caspari-Chraszczewski, former members of POW were actively planning to undertake a "punitive action" against the right in cooperation with the PPS. Chraszczewski was in contact with the radical Piłsudczyk (and later Premier) Marian Kościakowski, and the two discussed plans to punish the right and "deal with" General Haller for his "scandalous speeches." However, when they learned that the PPS had unexpectedly cancelled its "action," POW members decided that they could not move forward "without the backing of the masses"²²

Daszyński's intervention against a violent showdown with the NDs had an almost exact parallel in the Liberation. According to Stanisław Thugutt:

After returning home [from the funeral of Narutowicz] I barely had time to eat, when I was called to immediately go to the building of the Society for Hygiene, where a few hundred peasants had spontaneously arrived [from the country] and where the mood was somewhat dangerous. When I arrived, they were debating about how to take revenge for the murder. The mood was such that even the most radical measure would have been approved. All this took place with a grim and fearsome sense of focus, without any unnecessary gestures or yelling. I jumped up on the tribune and began to calm everyone down, promising that the crime would be punished by the rule of law. These were the days of my peak popularity within the party and therefore no one contradicted me and no one spoke after me; only occasionally it seemed that the whole room shivered and that I could hear some kind of deep and terrible groan of rage, and I wasn't sure whether these people might in the end trample me with their feet.²³

Therefore, just like in the case of the PPS, the anger of the rank and file was successfully restrained by the parliamentary leadership. As Bernard Singer writes, the dominant message delivered on December 16 by the parliamentary leaders of the left to the rank and file was one of restraint: "Comrades, do not let yourselves be provoked!"²⁴ Many Piłsudczyks later expressed a sense of regret at the left's failure to bring the spiritual authors of the president's murder to justice.²⁵ Writing years later, even Thugutt himself wasn't entirely sure if he had made the correct decision.²⁶ According to Pobóg-Malinowski, admittedly not an unbiased observer, public opinion in Poland would have readily accepted a Piłsudczyk coup d'état on December 16 as a fully justified "restoration of public order" and an understandable response to "the unbearable provocations" of the right.²⁷

But the window for an armed showdown with the right was rapidly closing. Energetic attempts to resolve the looming constitutional crisis were being undertaken by Maciej Rataj, the young and capable Piast deputy and Marshall of the Sejm who, in

accordance with the Constitution, temporarily assumed the position of Head of State. At 1:30pm, a mere two hours after the assassination, Rataj called a special meeting of the Council of Ministers. Piłsudski received a “special invitation” to attend the meeting despite no longer holding any official positions in the state.²⁸ At the meeting Rataj was able to forcefully resist the Marshall’s calls for Narutowicz’s choice for Premier, Darowski, to formally assume the post. Darowski, a decisive administrator with ties to the Piłsudczyk National Civic Union and no real power base of his own, seemed like an ideal candidate from Piłsudski’s point of view. However, Rataj demurred and announced that further decisions would have to be postponed until a formal communiqué announcing his own assumption of the position of Head of State was publicly issued. Thus, he left the question of the new government open and managed to avoid committing himself to Piłsudski’s demands.²⁹

With the communiqué duly issued, Rataj appointed General Władysław Sikorski as Premier and communicated this choice to Piłsudski as a *fait accompli*.³⁰ Impressively, Rataj was able to win Piłsudski’s assent for his choice of Premier, despite the Marshall’s reservations about his rival.³¹ Piłsudski himself assumed the position of Chief of the General Staff. Sikorski, who would go on to lead Poland’s government-in-exile during World War II, was perhaps the best military mind of the Polish army and had already distinguished himself in the Polish-Soviet War. He was considered to be a politically independent centrist—closer to Piłsudski than to the National Democrats, though not a Piłsudczyk. He also had a reputation as a decisive and strong handed administrator. Now Sikorski and Rataj moved swiftly and efficiently to bring stability to the country and save

the parliamentary system. By 10:30pm on the day of the murder, when the Council of Ministers met again, Poland had a new government, and a state of emergency was declared in Warsaw.³² While Piłsudczyks remained in influential posts, the government which came into existence was not under their control and the window of opportunity for the left to assume power and force a showdown with the National Democrats appears to have closed.³³

In fact, both Sikorski and Rataj were centrists who clearly wanted to steer a middle course between the demands of the National Democrats and the Piłsudczyks, without being beholden to either group. They also worked hard to resist calls for revenge by the left and not burn bridges with the NDs. In his first address to the nation, Sikorski railed against “criminal fanatics whose murderous actions have covered us with shame.”³⁴ But he also made sure not to antagonize the right and ensured that the left would not use the murder as an opportunity to take matters into its own hands:

Despite the understandable anger with which society is reacting to the murder of the President, I demand that everyone unconditionally keep their peace. The government has fulfilled its duty. The ones guilty of this perfidious murder will meet just and lawful punishment. But at the same time, any kind of vigilante action will be stopped with full determination.³⁵

On December 17, the Prosecutor’s Office issued warrants for the arrests of parliamentary deputies and *Rozwój* activists Iłski, Dymowski and Wyrębowski, but there were no large scale arrests of right-wing politicians.³⁶ There is no doubt that upon hearing Sikorski’s words writers like Stroński and Nowaczyński, who were accused by the left of inciting the murder, breathed a sigh of relief. Indeed, the National Democrats’ subsequent rehabilitation of Niewiadomski must be understood in the context of the left’s

failure to take any decisive action against those responsible for fomenting the hatred against Narutowicz.

The right's recovery of poise and reaffirmation of the principles which had led to the murder is extraordinary, and can be traced through an analysis of the Niewiadomski's depiction on the pages of *Gazeta Warszawska*, Poland's leading National Democratic newspaper. On December 17, in a front page article entitled "The Tragic Conflict," *Gazeta Warszawska* presented a position that was significantly different from the fearful disavowals of Niewiadomski published a mere day earlier.³⁷ To be sure, the paper reiterated that the murder was "was in nobody's interest." However, it also acknowledged that the nation was governed by its own laws and subject to its own "actions and reactions," which were beyond the control of any political forces or organizations. Since the election of the president, the key question facing all of Polish society was whether the nation would have its sovereignty "taken over" by the Jews. This new slavery now was not, like the partitions, "external." Rather, it had been created by the "willing compromise of the Poles with the enemy." The president, according to *Gazeta Warszawska* was a casualty of the nation's "reaction" to this state of affairs, and "became a victim of this conflict not as a person but as a symbol."³⁸ Of course, *Gazeta Warszawska* still condemned the actual act of the murder. However, it was also moving towards portraying the latter as something natural and inevitable, beyond the active agency of any political party or actor.

Just as Narutowicz was being deprived of his individuality and rendered into a “symbol” of Jewish control, so Niewiadomski was also beginning to undergo a somewhat slower process of symbolic metamorphosis in the National Democratic press. In this process, his individual act and motivation would be imbued with, and eventually subsumed by, a broader and deeper symbolic meaning. Thus, a mere day after the murder, *Gazeta Warszawska* no longer portrayed the murder as the “irresponsible” reaction of a “lunatic,” but as the more or less natural “reaction” of society as a whole.³⁹ The process of rehabilitating the murderer, and turning him into a symbol of Polish resistance to the Jewish threat, was beginning to take shape a mere day after the murder.

On December 18, *Gazeta Warszawska* explicitly drew the “link between the murder and the election of the president [by the Jews].”⁴⁰ Again the newspaper stopped well short of endorsing the action, but by positing a clear causal relationship between the two events it effectively accomplished two rhetorical goals. First, such a framing of the issue was a clever defense against the culpability of the nationalist movement. If the election of the president by the Jews would *inevitably* result in the nation “recoiling and expressing its outrage” in unpredictable ways, then the right-wing press and political class could not be blamed for the murder. Thus, it was a mistake for the left to blame “everything on intermediary factors, such as the articles and speeches” of right-wing politicians and publicists. The latter were merely *symptoms* of public outrage, and not the *causes* of the murder— which was itself also a symptom of the public anger at the role played by the Jews in the elections.

Secondly, by portraying the murder as the natural result of the manner in which the president had been elected, rather than of its own agitation, the right also reconfirmed the rectitude of its own claims regarding the illegitimate nature of the minorities' participation in the electoral process. It was as if the National Democrats were saying "we told you so." Only a new president elected by the "Polish majority," the article concluded, would be able to "pacify public opinion" and put everything back on the right track.⁴¹ Thus Narutowicz continued to be portrayed as an illegitimate president, and the violence that accompanied his election was unfortunate but natural.

Rzeczpospolita was perhaps more circumspect about portraying the murder as "natural" but, if anything, it was even more forceful in its defense of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority. As Stroński wrote on the day following the murder, "if the right defends with its entire might this one simple and sacred rule, and defends it legally, openly, proudly, and uncompromisingly, then how dare [the left] blame it for the covert actions of one unbalanced and unsound man?"⁴²

To make good on their commitment to the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, the leaders of three right-wing parties issued a public communiqué signed by Głąbiński, Chaciński, and Dubanowicz to PSL-Piast, in which they called for a "conference with the goal of finding a Polish majority" for the election of the next president. Somewhat embarrassingly, the communiqué referenced Piast's panicked statement from December 11, in which the peasant party had done its best to disassociate itself from the election of Narutowicz and place itself in the camp of the "Polish majority."⁴³

Gazeta Warszawska's ideological reaffirmation of the Doctrine came on December 21, 1922 in an article entitled "The Rule of the Nation State."⁴⁴ According to the article, most likely written by Dmowski's close collaborator Zygmunt Wasilewski, the fundamental conflict in Poland was not over socioeconomic questions or broadly understood political matters but over the role of nationality in politics. According to the author, the country could currently be divided into two camps. On the one side were those who believed that only Poles had the right to rule Poland. On the other, were those who "currently openly proclaim the thesis that all citizens of the Polish state have the right to rule Poland, not only formally but even morally." The author identified this second group with the "federal ideas" of Piłsudski (although the latter wasn't mentioned by name) and various attempts to find a *modus vivendi* acceptable to both the Poles and the minorities. This was the key issue over which the battle lines were drawn in Polish politics since 1918. "The election of the president," the article concluded, "was only an episode in this fundamental conflict," the outcome of which would decide the nation's future.⁴⁵

The very same day, Stanisław Głąbiński delivered a "program speech" to the ZLN deputies, in which he announced the party's political priorities. The speech is fascinating, both in what it tells us about the absolute lack of impact which the Narutowicz assassination had on the ZLN and, more generally, on the role of identity in National Democratic political thinking. According to Głąbiński, the most important issue facing the country in the future was "that Poland remain a Polish and Catholic state, because this rule is the rock foundation upon which our entire future will be built." To this end,

Głabiński announced that his party would ensure that all matters of fundamental state importance, such as changes to the constitution or presidential elections, would require the majority of Polish votes, regardless of the votes of “other nationalities.” In the same vein, he promised that the ZLN would fight to make Polish the official language in all state offices (which it *de facto* already was) and ensuring that Poles were represented in state offices, concessions, and any business dealing with the state, “at least in proportion to their numbers in the country.” He left an open door for *numerus clausus* in higher education, without making a specific promise to implement it.⁴⁶

The next critical issue facing Poland in the coming years was signing the Concordat with the Vatican. The high priority given to this proposal may seem somewhat surprising given the gravity of the economic and administrative challenges facing the country, but it most likely represented an attempt to reach out to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which may have been put off by the violence.⁴⁷ The third challenge was the full integration of the eastern borderlands or *Kresy* with “the fatherland.” In particular, Głabiński promised to take better care of the “hitherto neglected” Polish population of the multicultural region. On a more ominous note, he also noted that “separatist propaganda masquerading as the call for territorial or national autonomy must be stopped.” This, then, was simply another venue of the continuing battle for the “Polish Majority.”⁴⁸

Only after these three points, did the speaker move to the question of foreign relations (he advocated a continued alliance with France). And only at the very end of his

speech did he address economic questions and, to boot, did so in a rather vague manner. He promised increased credit for the parcellization of great estates and stressed a broad commitment to laissez faire economics. But even this late and brief economic expose ended up in the realm of identity politics. Rather than dwelling on tangible economic issues, Głabiński ended his speech with promises of rectifying the “sickly state of our cities.” The problem with the cities, according to this moderate ZLN leader, was that the latter were “filled with a non-Polish element which is often the enemy of Poland.”⁴⁹

Clearly, Hartglas’ and Daszyński’s hopes were misplaced—the Polish right had not committed suicide. In fact, judging from the reaction of the right-wing press and leading ZLN politicians, it is obvious that the assassination of Narutowicz had absolutely no impact on National Democratic thinking as far the Doctrine of the Polish Majority was concerned. Indeed, as we shall shortly see, even the qualified criticism of Eligiusz Niewiadomski would soon be replaced by quite a different attitude towards the murderer—one of reverence and respect.

The Trial

The trial of Eligiusz Niewiadomski would prove be one of the most important and galvanizing judicial proceedings in the history of the Second Republic, as well as a test for the country’s still relatively new justice system. Ordinary Varsovians lined up for hours in the hope of getting tickets to the proceedings, but almost all had been given away to state officials.⁵⁰ The left, in particular, wanted to ensure that the trial would not be interpreted

as unfair or biased against the accused. Sikorski's government wanted to avoid "antagonizing the still agitated, though now somewhat calmed" society.⁵¹ To this end, Kazimierz Rudnicki, the prosecutor in the case, received special instructions from the Minister of Justice, Makowski, to avoid making any statements which could be interpreted as making the whole National Democratic movement culpable in the murder.⁵² The same considerations prompted Rudnicki and the Supreme Justice, Franciszek Nowodworski, to follow regular procedure and avoid bringing the case to trial immediately. Rudnicki believed that there could not be even "a shade of doubt ... that the trial had taken place in conditions not in accordance with the law."⁵³

The trial was somewhat complicated by the fact that Leopold Skulski, Narutowicz's friend and hunting companion who had become the ward of the latter's children, brought forth a civil case against Niewiadomski. His attorney, Franciszek Paschalski, demanded the symbolic compensation of one Polish mark for Narutowicz's children as a "recompense for the moral loss inflicted upon them by the murder of their father."⁵⁴ In accordance with Polish law, the civil and criminal cases would be tried at the same time.

Niewiadomski demanded the death penalty for himself and initially didn't want to take on a defense counsel. However, Stanisław Kijeński, a well-known Warsaw lawyer and National Democrat, was able to persuade the murderer to use his services. Kijeński, who as it turned out was highly sympathetic to Niewiadomski's plight, persuaded the latter that he would act as an "advisor," help him navigate the thicket of legal complexities, and allow the accused man's own voice to be heard.⁵⁵

The facts of the case were absolutely clear, and the examination of a number of witnesses and experts brought absolutely no new factual information to the proceedings.⁵⁶ Niewiadomski readily acknowledged “breaking the law” and was ready to assume the consequences of this act. However, he did not acknowledge his “guilt.”⁵⁷ Indeed, the historical significance of the trial, which is not readily acknowledged by historians, lies in the symbolic realm. The question around which the trial would revolve pertained to Niewiadomski’s motives and his guilt in the moral, rather than legal, sense. As all the sides realized, what was really at stake was not the legal verdict, which was never in doubt, but the interpretation and meaning of Niewiadomski’s act. For Niewiadomski, the trial provided an opportunity to explain his motivations to all Poles. For Rudnicki and Paschalski, it provided the opportunity to publicly and condemn discredit these very motivations. The judge in this symbolic trial, the only one that mattered, would be public opinion.

Niewiadomski was eager to explain his actions and “shed light” on the “genesis” of the murder. Rather than limiting himself to stating his guilt, he immediately launched, with the court’s permission, into an eloquent though occasionally rambling explanation of his decision to kill President Narutowicz. According to his testimony, Niewiadomski had originally intended to kill Piłsudski. The idea first occurred to him in 1918, when the Lublin Government of Piłsudski’s followers attempted to introduce radical social reforms in Poland, but it was further cemented in his mind by subsequent events.⁵⁸

What were the reasons for Niewiadomski's hatred of the man who was, even by many of his political enemies, acknowledged to have had an enormous impact on the "rebirth" of Poland? According to Niewiadomski, Piłsudski was "not without heroic qualities." But he was also, and this was the reason for Niewiadomski's hatred, the creator of "Judeo-Poland."⁵⁹ Indeed, Niewiadomski's actions make no sense without reference to his pathological anti-Semitism. To understand the link between Piłsudski and the Jewish plot to undermine Poland we must delve deeper into Niewiadomski's worldview, which he proceeded to elaborate during his speech.

In brief, Niewiadomski faulted the Jews for creating and popularizing socialism, and infecting the latter with "materialism, the spirit of hatred, and lies." The Jews and socialists, according to Niewiadomski always hated "the national idea." Thus, it was no surprise, he claimed, that they hated Italian fascism, which he loved.⁶⁰ The link between Piłsudski and the Jews was indirect. According to Niewiadomski, in 1918 Piłsudski had the power to do anything he wanted to in Poland. He should have, according to Niewiadomski, given the country a program of "work, battle readiness, discipline, and strong government." Instead, the left-wing governments which Piłsudski had allowed to take power caused "social discipline to break down" and brought the country nothing but "anarchy." Thus, instead of giving Poland "strong government," he continued, Piłsudski allowed fully free elections which "put the fate of the country into the hands of cowherds and farmhands."⁶¹ Niewiadomski adduced all these failures of Piłsudski and his fellow socialists to the fact that the Jews had imbued socialism with "their racial elements which led to the degeneration of moral values."⁶²

In other words, Piłsudski, who should have broken with socialism (and its pernicious Jewish influence) decisively, failed to do so. Quite the opposite, under his watch the Jews continued to increase their domination of Poland. That was his greatest sin. To illustrate his point, Niewiadomski proceeded to provide supporting evidence gathered from his own involvement in public service. He complained of corruption, inefficiency, and waste, and bemoaned “the thousands of officials” producing an “endless number of useless papers.” Piłsudski wasn’t “directly responsible” for all this, but he had “set the tone” for the “lack of creative will” which characterized the state apparatus.⁶³

Niewiadomski proceeded to get somewhat more specific and drew an even more explicit link between Piłsudski and the Jews, based on the recollections of his service in the Polish Army’s counterintelligence unit. Here, he argued, Piłsudski’s responsibility was “direct.” In the army, Niewiadomski was shocked by the incompetence and ineptitude that surrounded him. His supervisor, Witecki, was “overweight and frequently late.” One of his colleagues, Szafrński, had “gold signet rings on his fat hands.” And another one was a Jew! Some of typists and secretaries also were Jewish. And “some Jew from Białystok or Grodno” was in charge of going through potentially subversive correspondence written in Yiddish.⁶⁴ According to Niewiadomski, this man was a German spy—and yet, the counter-intelligence service was “powerless” and could not arrest him.⁶⁵

The list of seemingly random grievances, many though not all of which involved Jews, went on. Some Jew who was a student at the Warsaw Polytechnic was caught with communist propaganda leaflets. Niewiadomski believed that he should have been shot on

the spot. But his supervisor, Rotmistrz Dalewski (who was not Jewish) decided to confiscate the flyers and let him off. There was a shortage of pens and paper in the army. A certain Horowitz, apparently a high ranking communist, was detained at the Citadel prison for a while. But then he was transferred to a POW camp, and was able to escape! One time, Niewiadomski was given an encrypted notebook to decipher, which turned out to be a list of communist sleeper agents in the Polish army. He deciphered it, but the notebook turned out to have been four the months old and was no longer useful. And so he went on, with trivial anecdote following trivial anecdote. “Who was responsible for all this?” he asked rhetorically as he drew closer to the end of his speech. His answer was simple: “Pilsudski.”⁶⁶

Narutowicz, Piłsudski’s successor, was to have a “lighter hand. “A light hand,” Niewiadomski concluded, is what is required by “thieves, speculators, bandits, embezzlers of public goods, peasants not wanting to pay taxes, Jews, plotters ..., all enemies of Poland.” This, according to Niewiadomski, was why Piłsudski chose Narutowicz as his successor. “The rest is well known,” he declared and fell silent.⁶⁷ The genuinely puzzled prosecutor Rudnicki retorted that on the basis of Niewiadomski’s remarks he “currently understood less about the motives and causes of the murder than he did before.”⁶⁸

According to his account, Niewiadomski was fully prepared kill Piłsudski and had even chosen the time and the place for the deed. Specifically, he was planning to shoot Piłsudski during the opening of an art exhibition about Warsaw in the era of King Stanisław August, on December 6. It was only that very morning that he learned that

Piłsudski would not seek the presidency. He then realized that killing Piłsudski *after* he had just given up power would “weaken the nationalist idea,” and that his action would be interpreted as that of a criminal or madman. Still, he was aware, quite presciently as it turned out, that despite not having accepted the presidency, Piłsudski “will continue to occupy a central position in the state, that he will help direct its fate, and that during the decisive confrontation, he will stand at the head of street thugs, paramilitaries, and regular army units in the fight against the national camp.” Thus, Piłsudski’s decision not to seek the presidency threw Niewiadomski into a state of despair.⁶⁹

At any rate, the link between Piłsudski and the Jewish domination of Poland, as well as the reasons behind Niewiadomski’s plan to kill the Marshall, were established. But Skulski’s attorney, Paschalski, wanted to know more precisely how these motives eventually turned into the plan to murder Narutowicz, and he asked the accused about how he had come to that decision.⁷⁰ Compared to his rant about Piłsudski and Jews in the army, his statement on Narutowicz was relatively brief and focused. In fact, Niewiadomski reiterated, almost word for word, the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, as it had been put forth by the mainstream right-wing newspapers. The murder, he claimed was:

One of the episodes in the fight for the nation, the fight for the Polishness of Poland. As such, my action is its own defense, and speaks for itself. ... I believe that as a human being, as a professor, as husband, and as a father, Narutowicz was a good, noble, admirable person. ... For me he existed not as human being but as the symbol of a certain political situation. ... He was a symbol of shame. My shots removed this badge of shame from the forehead of Poland. Through my deeds spoke not partisan fury, but the conscience and the offended dignity of the nation.⁷¹

Niewiadomski's statement was virtually indistinguishable from the charges leveled against the president in the press. Terms like "the fight for the Polishness of Poland" (*walka o polskość Polski*) or the "shame" (*hańba*) supposedly inflicted upon the nation by Narutowicz's election were staples of the right-wing press. There is absolutely no doubt that Niewiadomski's language was virtually identical to that of *Gazeta Poranna*, *Gazeta Warszawska*, or *Myśl Narodowa*. His act was a defense of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, as it had been defined and popularized by those papers.

Niewiadomski further reiterated these sentiments in his final remarks, which he was allowed before sentencing. He also framed his action in a larger political context, and expressed his hopes for the long-term consequences it would have:

I do not evince contrition. In fact, I evince a certain hope that the echoes of my shots will reach the most distant patches of Polish soil, that they knock to all homes, and all hearts, that they find their way to the camp of our opponents, those who are bewitched and do not know whom they serve, to noble and young hearts, and awaken in their consciences doubts as to whether they are serving the right cause.⁷²

Given these self-incriminating statements, as well as the public nature of the murder, the final verdict was never in doubt. Niewiadomski was duly sentenced to death by firing squad (though one of the three judges dissented on technical grounds and argued for the penalty of life imprisonment.) What is interesting for our purposes, however, is how Niewiadomski was judged by society and, more specifically, by the National Democratic right.

Reading his speeches today, it seems quite clear that, aside from the moral valuation we place upon his beliefs, Niewiadomski's thinking was not altogether sound.

His rambling speech associating Piłsudski with the Jewish conspiracy to ruin Poland, in particular, raises serious questions. As Prosecutor Rudnicki aptly pointed out, from anecdotal evidence describing the shortcomings and failures of an admittedly imperfect state apparatus, Niewiadomski drew global and totally unsubstantiated conclusions. To cite one of the most ludicrous examples, the fact the Second Department employed Jewish typists did little to prove that Piłsudski was helping the Jews create a Judeo-Poland.

Those who knew Niewiadomski described him as overly sensitive, quick to take offense, and concerned with appearances. “An actor in his own life,” was how fellow painter Kazimierz Lasocki described him.⁷³ Aside from speculation in the press, a full length book appeared in 1923 claiming to analyze Niewiadomski’s mental health and concluding that he suffered from schizophrenia.⁷⁴ But while the right-wing press had *initially* dubbed Niewiadomski a “madman,” it greeted his remarks at the trial extremely favorably. In fact, despite their seemingly paranoid and outrageous claims, for the National Democrats, Niewiadomski’s speeches at the trial actually helped to *refute* charges that he was insane. Strange as it may seem to us, they marked the beginning of a process in which Niewiadomski would be turned from a “lunatic” into a “noble soul.”

The first person to publicly defend the Niewiadomski was, not surprisingly, his defense attorney Stanisław Kijeński. The fact of this defense is not surprising since that was, obviously, Kijeński’s job. But Kijeński did not have to fully identify himself with Niewiadomski’s position. He could have defended the man even while acknowledging that his actions were misguided. But Kijeński did no such thing. In fact, the specific line

the defense he took may give us a pause. In his closing remarks, the defense attorney argued that:

Narutowicz was the ... victim of own his lack of knowledge of national life, and the lack of knowledge and understanding of the strange circumstance which propelled him to the most important position in Poland. ... There had never been a deed such as [Niewiadomski's] in the history of Poland. But then Poland had never found herself in circumstances as exceptional as those in which Niewiadomski saw her. Poland had never been sucked up by foreign elements in this manner. Niewiadomski saw that in every field we are being derailed and thrown out of the saddle. This is the tragedy of his deed, and the tragedy of his deep, loving, pained heart. ... In his speech, Mr. Niewiadomski said that he saw that Poland was being turned into a Judeo-Poland, and that the government was creating favorable conditions for this development and its growth. ... This fact also deserves consideration in the judgment of Niewiadomski's deed.⁷⁵

While questions concerning Niewiadomski's mental health may never be conclusively answered, Kijeński was one of the best Warsaw lawyers, and there can be no doubts whatsoever about his sanity. Moreover, Kijeński was fully aware that his words would reach a national audience and, no doubt, that they would put his reputation at stake. In this sense, the defense attorney's words are more important than those of Niewiadomski in helping us to evaluate the reaction of the right to the murder of Narutowicz.

In the above cited speech, Kijeński made a number of claims which may be shocking to us today, and which are virtually indistinguishable from those of Niewiadomski. First, Kijeński portrayed Narutowicz as the victim of his own ignorance. Had the President understood his nation better, the argument went, he would never have accepted the election under such circumstances. By "blaming the victim," Kijeński was arguing the situation was such that something bad was *bound* to happen to Narutowicz.

He was, therefore, subtly removing the agency from Niewiadomski and portraying the murder as the presumably *natural* result of Narutowicz's acceptance of the presidency from Jewish hands.

Kijeński's second claim is even more radical: Poland had *never* been controlled by "foreign elements to the extent that it was today." Let us not forget that the defense attorney was making this claim a mere four years after the country had regained its national independence. Yet, according to Kijeński, independent Poland was actually *less* independent than under Russian, Prussian, and Austrian rule. This extraordinary argument prompted Prosecutor Rudnicki to ask whether this was "lapsus lingue" on the defense attorney's part.⁷⁶ But it wasn't. As Kijeński explained, during the Partitions people at least had the "ideal of Poland" to look up to. But today, he went on, that very ideal has been subjected to a "terrible shame." Niewiadomski, according to Kijeński, felt this shame "along with millions" of other Poles. The battle against "external enemies" was less serious than against the "internal enemy who has taken root among us."⁷⁷

Finally, Kijeński fully endorsed Niewiadomski's claim that "Poland was being turned into a Judeo-Poland, and that the government was creating favorable conditions for this development and its growth." Moreover, while this "fact" didn't justify Niewiadomski's action in the *legal* sense, it certainly had an impact on the moral judgment which society ought to pass upon the murderer. Niewiadomski had acted out against a *genuine* threat and dishonor to Poland. In doing so, he admittedly broke the law. But precisely in this very conflict between justice in the legal and in the moral sense

lay “the tragedy of his deed, and the tragedy of his deep, loving, pained heart.” As we will see, this line of interpreting the motives behind the murder of Narutowicz would soon be taken further by the right-wing press.

The Tragic Hero

The coverage of the trial by the right-wing press speaks for itself. The day after the verdict was announced, *Gazeta Warszawska* reprinted the full text of Niewiadomski’s rambling first speech about the links between Piłsudski and the Jewish conspiracy against Poland. As we remember, among other accusations which can only be described as ludicrous, in his speech the murderer blamed Piłsudski for the fact that Jewish secretaries were employed by the army’s counterintelligence unit. Niewiadomski’s final words, in which he expressed a total lack of remorse for his deed, were also reprinted. The defense attorney’s remarks, which fully endorsed Niewiadomski’s worldview, were also printed in full but those of Rudnicki and Paschalski were very briefly summarized.⁷⁸

But perhaps the right-wing newspapers’ tacit endorsement of Niewiadomski’s outlandish claims should not be surprising. After all, while the evidence provided by Niewiadomski was spurious, the charges themselves were neither new nor outside the political discourse of the National Democratic movement. After all, in the days preceding the presidential election, writing in the in the prestigious *Myśl Narodowa*, Father Kazimierz Lutosławski forcefully argued that Piłsudski was “a tool of international Jewry in its battle with the Polish nation.”⁷⁹

Gazeta Warszawska's commentary on the trial stopped short of praising Niewiadomski—that would come later. It defended his deed in an elliptical fashion, motivated in part by fear of censorship.⁸⁰ Still, the message was clear:

Blood. The law has been satisfied and so is the law-abiding sense of a civilized society. The accused himself respected this sentiment by asking for the death penalty. But the dramas of national life do not die in the archives. They live in the minds of contemporaries, in their thoughts and imaginations, and become legends for future generations. ... The relationship between the deaths [of Narutowicz and Niewiadomski] is one of action and reaction. Individuals are subsumed by the flow of life which flows over graves, but if nationalist [*narodowa*] thought does not pull out a vital lesson from this tragic conflict, then learning history is in vain. ... Life knows no limits and from the grave it begets new life”⁸¹

The “vital lesson” in question was left to the imagination of the reader, but any reader of *Gazeta Warszawska* would immediately know what it was. Niewiadomski was descending from the national stage and into the realm of “legends,” but the lesson offered both by his death and that of Narutowicz was clear—Poland could not be ruled against the will of the Polish majority. The author’s reference to “action and reaction,” then, referred as much to the death sentence carried out against Niewiadomski being a reaction for his crime, as to the death of Narutowicz being the result of the nation’s reaction to his violation of its cardinal rules.

This point would be further elaborated in the coming weeks. But even before his execution, which would complete the process of turning him into a nationalist martyr, Niewiadomski was slowly being turned into a legitimate spokesman of the National Democratic idea. On January 4, 1923 *Gazeta Warszawska* fully claimed Niewiadomski’s views as its own:

Who cares that in his trial Niewiadomski had said [exactly] what the nationalist dailies were writing? What is important is that what the dailies were writing was what the Polish people were thinking and feeling. These dailies are the voice of the common people and not of [some] conspiracies. Niewiadomski, working on the basis of well-known and commonly accepted principles, came to a tragic and incorrect conclusion ... Nonetheless, those who refuse to see and understand the legitimate basis of this incorrect conclusion offer bad counsel ... [T]he nation brings its accusation against [Piłsudski and his followers] through the mouth of an individual [Niewiadomski]. It is true that ... Niewiadomski reiterated in his speech many of the accusations made by the nationalist press. He reiterated them in circumstances which shook the nervous system of the entire society, which made an impression in the wide world, and which will be remembered by for many generations.⁸²

In other words, *Gazeta Warszawska* now argued that Niewiadomski's views were the same as its own and, even more important, the same as those of "the Polish people."

Similarly, the "moderate" National Democrat, Władysław Rabski, believed that "10 million Poles" shared Niewiadomski's views.⁸³ Even his deed was no longer a "heinous assassination"; it was merely a "tragic and incorrect" application of legitimate and praiseworthy principles.⁸⁴

Finally, *Gazeta Warszawska*, implicitly accepted Niewiadomski as its own spokesman. The extraordinary, dramatic, or "tragic," to use the favorite adjective used by all right-wing papers, circumstances surrounding murderer's trial lent his message a gravitas that, it was hoped, would resonate in Poland and the world "for generations." In other words, though it still disassociated itself from the actual act of the murder, the right accepted Niewiadomski as its spokesman and was grateful for the soapbox which the trial effectively provided for the spreading of its gospel.⁸⁵

The same transformation could be seen among National Democratic intellectuals and highbrow publicists. Adolf Nowaczyński, the “artist-thinker” of the National Democratic movement, who had called Niewiadomski a “lunatic” in the days following the murder had radically changed his mind a mere three weeks later.⁸⁶ Now, Nowaczyński argued, no one could possibly dare utter the epithets “madman, fanatic, or irresponsible,” in relation to Niewiadomski. Rather, he continued, “the spirit which [Niewiadomski] displayed [when taking it upon himself to kill the president] cannot but provoke admiration for its strength and capacity for sacrifice.” Niewiadomski’s speech given at the trial was “not only a historical document from the current political moment, but a monument to a man of great character.”⁸⁷

There seemed no end to Nowaczyński’s cloying praise for the murderer:

A hard soul, a noble soul! ... A man as pure as a tear. A heroic character, unknown in our society, whose great soul renders all of us, on both the left and right, [moral] midgets. Today ... sadness grips us not for the one who fell accidentally, this pedestrian president, with whom Poland had no emotional bond, and who had simply become one of the symbols of the titanic struggle between the Christian world and Jewry [but for Niewiadomski].⁸⁸

Nowaczyński also reiterated Niewiadomski’s hope that the murder would change the political landscape of Poland and bring the Piłsudczyks to understand certain aspects of the National Democratic critique. Specifically, Nowaczyński had high hopes that even Piłsudski, who he generously admitted also possessed a “noble soul”, would be moved by “what Niewiadomski had to say about the Semites.” At this point, Nowaczyński revealed what he believed was the main divide between the followers of Piłsudski and the National Democrats—the former’s lack of understanding for the latter’s anti-Semitism.

Niewiadomski's words, Nowaczyński hoped, would open the Piłsudczyks' eyes to this issue. He wrote:

This isn't about the national minorities with whom we all want agreement, peace, and harmony: the Germans, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. This is about that one national minority, the demon of humanity, this singular anti-Christian minority, the disease known as Jewry, the demon with which Europe and the entire world are now leading a struggle to the death. Hopefully, these commandments from [Niewiadomski's] testament will etch themselves into the memory of Piłsudski and all who believe in Piłsudski.⁸⁹

Needless to say, Nowaczyński's hopes of Piłsudski's imminent conversion to Niewiadomski's gospel of anti-Semitism were dashed. The "artist-thinker" of the right promptly found himself under arrest, while his article was confiscated by censorship.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, his suggestion that a rapprochement between the Endeks and the Piłsudczyks was possible if the latter embraced anti-Semitism seemed to anticipate the creation of the anti-Semitic Camp of National Unity (*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego* or OZN) by some of Piłsudski's followers in the late 1930s. What is more important for the present purposes is to note that, in Nowaczyński's view, Niewiadomski's anti-Semitic speeches at his trial fully rehabilitated the murderer and made it possible for the right to embrace him as a sort of tragic hero.

Still, the process by which Eligiusz Niewiadomski would become a fully-fledged martyr of the right could only be consummated by his execution. The right-wing press by and large accepted the death penalty as a legitimate punishment, and only Stanisław Stroński raised a mild legalistic objection on the pages of the *Rzeczpospolita*.⁹¹ But it was precisely the execution and the funeral which turned Niewiadomski into a martyr and a

cause célèbre. Extensive details of the execution were reported on the front pages of right-wing newspapers with pathos that undoubtedly would have pleased the murderer himself.

The execution was scheduled for the morning of January 30, 1923. “At 6am,” *Gazeta Warszawska* reported, Niewiadomski enjoyed a conversation with Stanisław Kijeński, who reported that the murderer was “in excellent spirits” and “even joking around.” He then met with a priest, Father Sontak, and received him with “great warmth and gratitude.” At 6:30 am, a car with an armed escort left the Warsaw Citadel and proceeded to the execution place just outside the gates. As a precaution, the Citadel was encircled by a ring of troops.⁹²

Somewhat comically, the car carrying the prisoner broke down, and Niewiadomski walked the last stretch of the way “in a firm stride.” He asked the guards not to hold him, since he “didn’t want people to think that he required being held down.” The murderer then spoke to another priest, was blessed and kissed the cross. Six soldiers were delegated to the execution, and Niewiadomski asked that he not be tied to the pole and that his eyes remain uncovered. His wish was granted.⁹³ According to the *Gazeta Warszawska* relation:

He stood firmly, and asked the soldiers to aim at his head. Then he calmly took off his coat, hat, and glasses and tossed them aside. He stood erect, smiled, and held up a flower he had received from his family.⁹⁴

According to *Rzeczpospolita*, he left behind a little note asking that the funeral be simple “since he never liked to reach for distinguished places and would like to maintain

this style.”⁹⁵ Just before the shots went off, he cried “I die for Poland, which is being destroyed by Piłsudski!” These last words could not be printed due to censorship, and only emerged in subsequent days. After his body was laid to rest in a shallow grave, the gates of the Citadel were opened and a “pilgrimage” consisting of people who had waited outside the army cordon, most of them poor and working class, entered to pay their respects to the deceased.⁹⁶

Gazeta Warszawska’s eulogy for Niewiadomski was written by Dmowski’s friend and collaborator Zygmunt Wasilewski. It marked the culmination of the astonishingly quick rhetorical transformation of the murderer from a “madman” to “a man of great character.” Wasilewski wrote:

He was righteous, idealistic and sensitive, but demanding and strict with himself. ... His character was also described as straight arrow. He evinced great strength, openness, and courage. ... During the trial he proved ... that he governed his will precisely and with full awareness of his fate. We had before us the model of a strong character, imposing principles upon his actions. The deed, for which he met a terrible punishment, was a catastrophe. But the spiritual type which had manifested itself in the process must win admiration for its strong makeup and capacity for sacrifice. Even [non-nationalists] must marvel at his psychic state, in which the interests of the individual were completely subsumed by those of the nation. In this sense, his speeches at the trial will remain not only a historical document of the current moment, but the memento of a man of great character.⁹⁷

It is important to further highlight the somewhat complicated strategy behind Wasilewski’s rhetoric. Wasilewski still condemned the murder itself as a “catastrophe.” But this catastrophe was the result of Niewiadomski’s spiritual purity, his identification with the nation, and his dedication to a moral standard that was ultimately higher than the law. Morally, Niewiadomski was in the right, even if from both the legal and tactical

perspectives he had to be condemned. In this sense, Wasilewski and the National Democrats were simultaneously able to both claim Niewiadomski as one of their own and to disown him. They claimed him on the grounds of his moral purity and dedication to the nation, and disowned him on the grounds of the illegal and politically harmful character of his actions.

But ultimately, there was little doubt as to what their final judgment was. For Wasilewski, there was no doubt as to history's verdict on Niewiadomski:

A child reading Niewiadomski's words 100 years from now will not be able to understand why a man of these views, feelings, and character, was put to death in his own fatherland, by the will of the state, and with his own assent. ... With his sacrifice he gave witness to the idea of the nation.⁹⁸

In other words, if the right could not *fully* claim him today, Wasilewski intimated, it was for complicated legal and tactical reasons which future generations would not even be able to comprehend. But there was no doubt that in the long run history would vindicate Niewiadomski. Stripped from its complicated legal and political context, and evaluated solely on moral grounds, the murder was ultimately an act of righteous sacrifice for the nation.

The fact that the authorities did their best to keep the funeral of Niewiadomski secret is an indicator that the government saw it is a potential source of embarrassment or, worse, a rallying point for the nationalist opposition. The date of the funeral, February 6, 1923 was announced late on the evening of the previous day. Furthermore, permission for the funeral was given only on the condition that the body would be exhumed at 4am and the hearse would leave the Citadel by 6am. If these conditions were not met, the

funeral would not take place. Further, the hearse had to avoid main streets and proceed by a circuitous route outlined by the security services in order to avoid attention.⁹⁹

The sympathetic proprietor of a large funeral parlor, a certain Seweryn Staniszewski, offered his services for free. According to *Gazeta Warszawska*, this was only one of the “many proofs that the public adequately appreciated the deceased’s greatness of soul and character.”¹⁰⁰ Niewiadomski was laid in a closed coffin with two roses, one red the other white. At the gates of the Citadel a large group of people awaited with wreaths and flowers. Before reaching the Powązki Church, horses were let go from the carriage and a group of volunteer youths pulled the hearse into the Church. At the church, the crowd sang the nationalist anthem, *Rota*.¹⁰¹

According to *Gazeta Warszawska*, by the time the procession reached the Powązki cemetery it numbered some 10,000 people. The crowd, mostly made up of “poorer classes,” lined the entire path from the church to the gravesite. Numerous wreaths were carried in front of the procession, and flowers and fir branches was thrown in its path. One particular wreath singled out by the *Gazeta Warszawska* correspondent bore the encryption: “From the Polish Women of America – All Hail the Immortal.” In a further display of public respect for the murderer noted by dutifully by the newspapers, one of the men present, a military veteran, took a medal (Cross of Brave or *Krzyż Walecznych*, one of Poland’s highest military decorations) off his chest and tossed it into the grave.¹⁰² As the coffin was lowered into the ground, the *Rzeczpospolita* correspondent noted, “one thought grabbed everyone: a thought of this solemn and sad moment, and a sadness,

which knows no words, united all hearts.”¹⁰³ Later in the day, the grave was visited by “throng of mourners.” They brought flowers and wreaths, which were piled so high on the grave that they were visible from far away “among the trees and the cemetery statues.”¹⁰⁴

The right’s fascination with the figure of Niewiadomski continued to the point where he became the object of a veritable cult. Masses for the murderer’s soul proliferated. On February 11, less than a week after his funeral, the Polish Episcopate had to issue a statement calling on the clergy to cease abusing masses for the souls of the dead.¹⁰⁵ Writing in the 1930s, Piast leader Wincenty Witos noted:

Even today ... Niewiadomski’s grave is a place of pilgrimages and the anniversary of his death brings many of his admirers there. It is noteworthy that among them one can find members of all the social classes of Warsaw. ... By the manner these people conduct themselves it is clear that they consider him to be at least a saint.¹⁰⁶

While awaiting his execution, Niewiadomski finished a book on art history and penned an “open letter to the nation.” Right-wing newspapers published the latter which, for the most part, was a restatement of the paranoid views the murderer had expressed during his trial.¹⁰⁷ In the letter Niewiadomski, once again attempted to frame his act in a historical perspective:

My death is the necessary culmination of my deed. My deed will only flower once watered with my own blood. ... I had to hit Poland with a lightning bolt to awaken those who believe that Poland was already a reality, that the time of sacrifices and striving is over, and that it is possible to put our weapons down. What our eyes are looking upon is not yet Poland. It is still

the Poland of Piłsudski—Judeo-Poland. Real Poland still has to be built. This process is now starting. My hopes were not in vain. Whatever is Polish and healthy in the camp of the left heard my voice. I die happy that the work of waking Polish consciences and unifying Polish hearts will be fulfilled.”¹⁰⁸

Niewiadomski’s hope that “whatever was Polish and healthy” in “the camp of the left” would heed his call will be discussed more closely in the next chapter. But his impact on the right was already evident at the moment of his death. As we have seen, the “Doctrine of the Polish Majority,” in the name of which Niewiadomski claimed to die, became enshrined in the program and politics of the ZLN and its coalition partners in the ChZJN. The murder of the president did not stop this process. Conversely, by reaffirming the doctrine even in the face of its most extreme and murderous implications, the right emerged from the crisis with a renewed sense of its own righteousness.

Niewiadomski himself became a veritable hero to the right. Maciej Rataj wrote that despite being executed, Niewiadomski was “not morally destroyed” in the public imagination.¹⁰⁹ This is an understatement. While the right initially recoiled at the act of the murder and attempted to distance itself from its perpetrator, that position changed very quickly. The very same Adolf Nowaczyński who had had called Niewiadomski a “madman” on December 23, praised him “as a man of great character” less than two weeks later. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, in the eyes of National Democratic intellectuals like Nowaczyński or Zygmunt Wasilewski, Niewiadomski had undergone an apotheosis. In light of the right-wing newspapers’ praise of the murderer, the adulation heaped upon him by the masses of Warsaw should not be surprising either.

But perhaps the most amazing feature of this process is that it occurred because of, rather than despite, Niewiadomski's paranoid and rambling speeches delivered during the trial. It was these speeches, in which the murderer supported his bizarre claim that Piłsudski was creating a Judeo-Poland with equally bizarre evidence, which won him the admiration of the right-wing intellectuals and the public. Clearly, the murder of Narutowicz was *not* an embarrassment or a setback for the National Democratic right. Scholars who have made this point seem to have been unduly influenced by the *immediate* reaction of right-wing newspapers and politicians to the assassination. But a mere three weeks after the fact, Niewiadomski and everything he stood for had been fully rehabilitated. Far from being ashamed of him, right-wing publicists openly expressed the hope that Niewiadomski's deeds and words might even influence the left and bring it around to accept anti-Semitism. As we will see in the next chapter, these hopes were not as absurd as they may seem today.

¹ Quoted in Adolf Nowaczyński, "Po zamachu," *Myśl Narodowa*, December 23, 1922, 6.

² Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 606.

³ Nowaczyński, "Po Zamachu," 6.

⁴ "Wobec zbrodniczego zamachu," *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 16, 1922.

⁵ Stanisław Stroński, "Ciszej na ta trumną!" *Rzeczpospolita*, December 17, 1922.

⁶ "Wam w odpowiedzi," *Robotnik*, December 19, 1922.

⁷ Antoni Anusz "Rękę karaj nie ślepy miecz!" *Kurjer Poranny*, December 18, 1922.

⁸ "Dokąd idziemy?" *Rzeczpospolita*, December 17, 1922.

⁹ "Wobec zbrodniczego zamachu."

¹⁰ "Wobec zbrodniczego zamachu."

¹¹ The assumption that Niewiadomski was part of a larger conspiracy was nearly universal. Rudnicki, *Wspomnienia prokuratora*, 155.

¹² Stanisław Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego o zamach na życie prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Gabryela Narutowicza w dniu 16 Grudnia 1922 r.* (Warszawa: Perzyński Niklewicz, 1923), 14.

¹³ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 23.

¹⁴ These were so serious that the new premier, General Sikorski had to call a special conference to dispel them. The figures mentioned by Sikorski as having been supposedly assassinated included himself, Marshall Rataj, General Haller, and the National Democratic deputy Father Godlewski. "Prezes ministrów gen. Sikorski do przedstawicieli prasy," *Kurjer Poranny*, December 19, 1922.

¹⁵ Letter from Bogusław Miedziński to Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, April 12, 1955. Cited in Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 605–606.

¹⁶ Pajewski, *Gabriel Narutowicz*, 175.

¹⁷ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 240.

¹⁸ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 187–191.

¹⁹ Pragier, *Czas przeszły dokonany*, 240.

²⁰ This was General Władysław Sikorski's assessment of Piłsudski's intentions. Maciej Rataj, *Pamiętniki 1918-1927* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1965), 131; Józef Haller, *Pamiętniki: Z wyborem dokumentów i zdjęć* (London: Veritas, 1964), 237.

²¹ Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 605–606.

²² Chraszczewski, "Pamiętniki," 88.

²³ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 88.

²⁴ Bernard Singer, "Mordowanie po śmierci," *Nasz Przegląd*, December 20, 1932 quoted in Singer, *Od Witosa do Ślawka*, 121.

²⁵ Chraszczewski, "Pamiętniki," 94.

²⁶ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 88.

²⁷ Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 606.

²⁸ PRM, December 16, 1922, 679.

²⁹ PRM, December 16, 1922, 680.

³⁰ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 130–131; Pajewski, *Gabriel Narutowicz*, 172–173.

³¹ According to Pobóg-Malinowski, it was Piłsudski who suggested the choice of Sikorski to Rataj. However, the sources do not support this. Rataj claims to have explicitly rejected Piłsudski's suggestion that Darowski remain Premier, and then presented the Marshall with the choice of Sikorski despite Piłsudski's indication that he would like to assume this position himself. Still, according to Rataj, Piłsudski readily assented to Sikorski's premiership, because he saw the latter as capable of instilling order and respect for the law. Haller claims Sikorski told him that Piłsudski was fully prepared to seize power immediately after Narutowicz's death, and that it was only Rataj's speedy appointment of Sikorski as Premier which derailed this plan. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 606; Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 131; Haller, *Pamiętniki*, 237. The relationship between Piłsudski and Sikorski is a fascinating one and deserves more careful study. While it is clear that Piłsudski immensely respected Sikorski's military abilities he distrusted his political judgment and personal loyalty. There were many superficial reasons for this distrust, but it ultimately boiled down to a clash of egos. More specifically, Piłsudski was unwilling to share power within his "camp" and Sikorski's was unwilling, or unable, to play second fiddle to Piłsudski. After 1926, this personal rivalry led to Sikorski's exile from both politics and the army. For an excellent discussion of the

relationship between Piłsudski and Sikorski see the chapter on Sikorski in Waclaw A. Zbyszewski, *Gawędy o ludziach i czasach przedwojennych* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2000).

³² PRM December 16, 1922, 681-682; “Echa Zamachu w Sejmie,” *Gazeta Warszawska* December 16, 1922.

³³ The Piłsudczyks were still in charge of the military, with General Sosnkowski as Minister of Defence and Piłsudski himself as Chief of Staff.

³⁴ “Odezwa rządu,” PRM, 687.

³⁵ “Odezwa rządu,” PRM, 687.

³⁶ Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 607. As parliamentary deputies, the three escaped punishment. Malinowski mistakenly notes that Nowaczyński was also arrested on that day. In fact, his arrest took place later, after he published an article praising Niewiadomski.

³⁷ “Tragiczny konflikt,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 17, 1922.

³⁸ “Tragiczny konflikt.”

³⁹ Compare the strikingly different tones of “Tragiczny konflikt,” *Gazeta Warszawska* December 17, 1922 and “Wobec zbrodniczego zamachu,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 16, 1922.

⁴⁰ “Dni przełomowe,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 16, 1922.

⁴¹ “Dni przełomowe.”

⁴² “Wobec zbrodniczego zamachu,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 16, 1922.

⁴³ “Po zgonie prezydenta,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 18, 1922. For Piasts’ statement see the previous chapter.

⁴⁴ “Zasada państwa narodowego” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 21, 1922.

⁴⁵ “Zasada państwa narodowego” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 21, 1922.

⁴⁶ Stanisław Głąbiński “Przemówienie programowe,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 23, 1922.

⁴⁷ It must be remembered that the National Democrats’ alliance with the Roman Catholic Church was still rather fragile in the early 1920s, and reflected more the sympathies of parish priests than the policy of the Church hierarchy. On the one hand, the Church hierarchy discouraged participation in politics by clergymen, and viewed the National Democrats, who had only recently abandoned their atheism, with suspicion. In fact, Bishop Teodorowicz, the most militant high ranking clergyman with Endek sympathies, who had been a deputy to the 1919 *Sejm*, was ordered to leave public life on orders from Rome. On the other hand, Dmowski was still in the process of shaking off the ND’s atheistic image, in an attempt to move closer to the Church. The violence and anarchy of December 11 was unsurprisingly frowned upon by the Church hierarchy and the Vatican, and it could have led to a fracturing of the fragile alliance between the Church and the NDs. Głąbiński’s prioritization of the Concordat must be seen partly in this context. For more on the relationship between the National Democrats and the Catholic Church in 1920s Poland see Porter, *Faith and fatherland*, esp. 175–181.

⁴⁸ Stanisław Głąbiński “Przemówienie programowe,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 23, 1922.

⁴⁹ Stanisław Głąbiński “Przemówienie programowe.”

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- ⁵⁰ “Sprawa mordercy prezydenta,” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 29, 1922.
- ⁵¹ Rudnicki, *Wspomnienia prokuratora*, 156.
- ⁵² Rudnicki, *Wspomnienia prokuratora*, 156.
- ⁵³ Rudnicki, *Wspomnienia prokuratora*, 166.
- ⁵⁴ Rudnicki, *Wspomnienia prokuratora*, 167.
- ⁵⁵ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 58.
- ⁵⁶ Rudnicki, *Wspomnienia prokuratora*, 169.
- ⁵⁷ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 12. It is interesting that the very same argument was put forth by the Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik.
- ⁵⁸ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 12.
- ⁵⁹ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 13.
- ⁶⁰ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 14.
- ⁶¹ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 16.
- ⁶² Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 18.
- ⁶³ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 20–1.
- ⁶⁴ The latter would hardly have been surprising, since very few Poles spoke, and let alone read, Yiddish.
- ⁶⁵ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 22–5.
- ⁶⁶ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 22–5.
- ⁶⁷ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 22–5.
- ⁶⁸ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 56.
- ⁶⁹ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 13.
- ⁷⁰ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 56.
- ⁷¹ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 56.
- ⁷² Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 87.
- ⁷³ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 45.
- ⁷⁴ Urstein, Maurycy, *Eligiusz Niewiadomski w oświetleniu psychiatrii* (Warszawa: Rola, 1923).
- ⁷⁵ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 82.
- ⁷⁶ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 84.
- ⁷⁷ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 86–87.
- ⁷⁸ “Sprawa E. Niewiadomskiego,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, January 1, 1923. The provincial National Democratic press also printed the full text of Niewiadomski’s speeches, and even that of Rudnicki, thought not that of Paschalski. “Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego,” *Kurjer Poznański*, January 3, 1923.
- ⁷⁹ “Sprawa E. Niewiadomskiego” *Gazeta Warszawska* January 1, 1923, 1-3; Kazimierz Lutosławski, “Zmora,” *Myśl Narodowa*, December 16, 1922, 5.
- ⁸⁰ Although censorship in Poland was very mild, following the murder of Narutowicz, articles overtly praising Niewiadomski were confiscated. Adolf Nowaczyński, was arrested and held in Mokotów jail for his article “Testament” in *Myśl Narodowa*. According to the Polish Telegraph Agency, Nowaczyński was arrested for “obviously showing approval for the crime perpetrated upon the highest person in the state.” “Aresztowanie A. Nowaczyńskiego” *Gazeta Warszawska* January 4, 1923.

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- ⁸¹ “Uwagi” *Gazeta Warszawska*, January 1, 1923.
- ⁸² “Prawda i dykteryjki,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, January 4, 1923.
- ⁸³ Władysław Rabski, “Rząd zemsty,” *Myśl Narodowa*, January 13, 1923.
- ⁸⁴ “Prawda i dykteryjki,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, January 4, 1923.
- ⁸⁵ “Prawda i dykteryjki.”
- ⁸⁶ Rabski, “Rząd Zemsty,” 7.
- ⁸⁷ Adolf Nowaczyński, “Testament,” *Myśl Narodowa*, January 6, 1923.
- ⁸⁸ Nowaczyński, “Testament.”
- ⁸⁹ Nowaczyński, “Testament.”
- ⁹⁰ However, the courts found no basis for Nowaczyński’s detention and he was released within a matter of days.
- ⁹¹ Stanisław Stroński, “W ostatniej chwili,” *Rzeczpospolita*, January 29, 1923. Stroński complained that the trial was carried out by a panel of judges, a holdover from the Russian judicial system, rather than by a jury, as the new Polish law demanded.
- ⁹² “Stracenie E Niawiadomskiego,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, January 30, 1923.
- ⁹³ “Stracenie E Niawiadomskiego.”
- ⁹⁴ “Stracenie E Niawiadomskiego.”
- ⁹⁵ “Stracenie Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego” *Rzeczpospolita*, January 30, 1923.
- ⁹⁶ “Stracenie E Niawiadomskiego.”
- ⁹⁷ Zygmunt Wasilewski, “Ś.p. Eligiusz Niewiadomski,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, January 30, 1923.
- ⁹⁸ Zygmunt Wasilewski, “Ś.p. Eligiusz Niewiadomski.”
- ⁹⁹ “Pogrzeb Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego” *Rzeczpospolita* February 6, 1923; “Pogrzeb Ś.p. Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, February 6, 1923.
- ¹⁰⁰ “Pogrzeb Ś.p. Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego.”|
- ¹⁰¹ “Pogrzeb Ś.p. Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego.”
- ¹⁰² “Pogrzeb Ś.p. Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego.”
- ¹⁰³ “Pogrzeb Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego.”
- ¹⁰⁴ “Na grobie ś.p. E. Niewiadomskiego,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, February 6, 1923.
- ¹⁰⁵ Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 608.
- ¹⁰⁶ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 34.
- ¹⁰⁷ Initially newspapers with the open letter were confiscated, but it was subsequently published without further protests from censorship.
- ¹⁰⁸ “Po straceniu i pogrzebie Ś.p. Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, February 7, 1923.
- ¹⁰⁹ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 138.

CHAPTER X

The Defeat of the Civic Nation

On December 14, 1922 a mere three days after the peak of the riots against Narutowicz and two days before the president's murder, the Polish *Sejm* met for its fourth legislative session. One might have reasonably expected that the events of December 11 would play an important role in the legislative body's deliberations. Indeed, all the parties brought forth their own motions demanding justice and a firm response to the outrages perpetrated by the "fascists" (or in the case of the motion tabled by the three right-wing clubs, the "socialist militias.")¹ Ultimately, the debate ended up as little more than empty posturing, with all the respective motions being sent to the Administrative Commission, which would deliver its findings only six months later.² However, even before the events of December 11 could be discussed, the *Sejm* chose to deal with another pressing issue, the symbolism of which is extraordinarily important. The issue given precedence over the discussion of the riots was the hanging of the cross in the *Sejm* itself.

The discussion concerning the hanging of the cross was important not only for the prominence it received, but also for its extraordinary outcome which, as we will see, foreshadowed a newly emerging trend in Polish politics. During the first *Sejm*, the cross was hanging in the hallway. An earlier motion to put it in the *Sejm* chamber itself had

been opposed by the left and center as well as a minority on the right, who believed that a cross should not be hung in such a coarse and vulgar environment.³ Now, with “the *Sejm* entering a new period of activity,” the National Democratic deputy Brownsford hoped, “the sight of the cross will give strength and power to the defenders of truth.”⁴ In the extremely polarized political environment, where the wounds of the riots had literally not yet healed, one might have expected the issue of the cross to raise objections from the left. However, aside from a few humorous heckles, not a single substantive objection was raised to the hanging of the cross in the *Sejm*—despite the fact that the Polish left of the early 1920s could at times be fiercely anticlerical.⁵ Brownsford’s motion passed by a large majority and without any dissenting voices.

Even more tellingly, the liberal *Kurjer Polski* praised the restraint of the left-wing deputies, who were able to resist this National Democratic “provocation” and thus “did not provide [the right] with a valuable weapon” to be used against its enemies. Even more praise was heaped upon the Jewish deputies, who “made themselves absent during the deliberations, probably in the justified fear that [the right’s] merciless demagoguery might blame them for some disrespectful heckles which could possibly have been raised by the left.”⁶ The restraint and lack of fighting spirit shown by the left despite the ultimate failure of December 11 riots may be surprising. The fact that one of Poland’s leading liberal newspapers would praise the left for its conciliatory stance, even in the aftermath of such a concentrated assault on the constitutional order by the right, is also significant.⁷ In fact, the capitulation on the question of the cross was the example of a new attitude taking hold of the Polish left.

Piast and the Politics of Appeasement

After presiding over the session where the decision to hang the cross was almost unanimously ratified, Marshall of the *Sejm* Maciej Rataj headed to meet with President Narutowicz. According to Rataj, Narutowicz, who had shown remarkable resilience in the face of the concentrated attacks of the right against him and was certainly no pushover, was hoping to eventually create a coalition government of “all the Polish parties, from the Liberation to the Christian Democrats.” He had already met with Chaciński, one of the Christian Democrats’ leaders, and was busily working on winning them for a coalition government. On the other hand, Narutowicz made no attempt to negotiate with the minorities and did not seem to have even entertained the possibility of creating a government based on the coalition of the Bloc and the left, which had so recently brought him to power.⁸

It is highly unlikely that Narutowicz, who by all accounts shared the inclusive conception of the Polish nation articulated by his friends from the National Civic Union, actually changed his mind because of the riots.⁹ Rather, his decision to ignore the minorities appears to have been motivated by the conviction that stability in Poland could only be achieved by reaching some sort of a *modus vivendi* between the left and the right.¹⁰ In his last press interview, Narutowicz claimed that the role of the president “as he understood it,” was to bring about “mutual understanding” between the “two great parties” which divided Polish society.¹¹ It seems that in the aftermath of the riots, the President, the Marshall of the *Sejm*, as well as many deputies from the left were willing to

compromise their principles and acquiesce in many of the right's demands, including the ostracism of the minorities, in order to bring about stability. While the riots may have failed in their immediate objective of preventing the president-elect from assuming his office, they were successful in the larger and more important goal of winning his *de facto* acquiescence for the Doctrine of the Polish Majority.

Still, the murder of Narutowicz threw a new element into the political equation. As Bernard Singer writes, "the tragic death of the president temporarily drew together the center, the left, and even the national minorities."¹² Some on the left expressed the hope that the death of Narutowicz "would not be in vain" and that it would "wash off the mud which had been heaped upon the president."¹³ Therefore, it was not unreasonable to expect that the indignation felt by many of the deputies after the cold blooded murder would rally Piast and the left, and perhaps prompt them to secure an agreement with the national minorities in order to shut the National Democrats out of power. In reality, however, the opposite happened. The capitulation to the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, and the drift to the right, was most easily discernible in the case of Piast. As Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski writes:

Until the elections of 1922, [Piast leader] Witos marched under the banner of cooperation with Piłsudski, but after the murder of Narutowicz he fell into a panic. The right was sending him letters with threats that now, after Narutowicz, it was his turn. Witos, frightened, believed that Poland was in a state of anarchy and sought some stabilization. He concluded that the impunity of the right is a sign of its strength, and of the weakness of the left, and that power is on the side of those who kill with impunity rather than those being killed.¹⁴

There is no doubt that even before the actual assassination, many Piast deputies were profoundly shaken by the riots in Warsaw. Their desperate attempts to dissociate themselves from Narutowicz a mere day after having played the decisive role in his election are ample testimony to this.¹⁵ Nor was their fear unjustified. Most Piast deputies were peasants from far flung corners of Poland and strangers to the “big city,” who had no militia or any sort of power base in the capital which they could rely upon for protection. The riots of December 11 must have convinced them that the police, as well as the organs of the state in general, could not be relied upon for this purpose.

However, to explain Piast’s newly found willingness to cooperate with the right solely in terms of the visceral fear of violence felt by many of the party’s deputies would be to do an injustice to the party’s leadership, which was in reality both less cowardly and more sophisticated than it emerges in Pobóg-Malinowski’s account. Indeed, to fully understand Piast’s turn to the right, it is necessary to turn to the political thought and practice of Maciej Rataj, the party’s second most important figure and formidable Marshall of the *Sejm*. Rataj, the son of poor peasants who by his own admission spent most of his childhood years herding cows, was an extremely capable and intelligent man. During the years 1919-1926, he became one of the country’s most influential and respected politicians. Rataj’s influence was rooted partly in his reputation for moderation and non-partisanship. As Bernard Singer wrote with a good deal of sarcasm:

Rataj won the hearts of all. ... Deputies from the right visited his office as if going to confession. In difficult moments, when [a vote of non-confidence against him loomed in the *Sejm*] the PPS came to his rescue. ... With time, he became known as the embodiment non-partisan patriotism.¹⁶

Rataj expounded his understanding of the central problem facing Polish politics in a conversation with moderate Endek leaders Stanisław Głąbiński and Marian Seyda, which took place on December 12. Rataj asked Głąbiński, who was deeply disturbed by the riots of the previous day, what the right planned to do next. Głąbiński answered that the National Democrats would become the parliamentary opposition. To this Rataj replied:

There are two possibilities in this regard. Either no parliamentary majority will arise (since the majority that elected Narutowicz was accidental), in which case whom will you oppose!? The state!? That is the politics of angry children. In the other case, you will push Piast to cooperate with the minorities in order to win the anti-Semitic card, in which case Piast will respond to your anti-Semitic slogans with a radical social program ("Take the land now!") and will defeat you, because the peasant won't care whether the land is being given to him by a Catholic or a Jew.¹⁷

To Głąbiński's shocked response that this would be terribly detrimental to the interests of the "state," Rataj retorted that if the National Democrats "cared about the state, they should not push Piast towards cooperation with the minorities."¹⁸

Rataj's formulation of the alternatives facing Polish political life is striking not only for its insightful analysis but also for the congruence of his thinking with David Ost's theorization of political anger.¹⁹ Ost argues that narratives which seek to explain and channel political anger can be broadly divided into those which focus on economic or structural explanations of "what is wrong" and those which offer explanations based on identity. In his exhortation to Głąbiński, Rataj effectively described the choice between these two types of narratives as the primary question of Polish politics. As we have seen in Chapter VI, the National Democrats offered an explanation based on identity politics (the

Jews were the fundamental problem facing Poland). This narrative could be deployed with some effectiveness against Piast, if the latter entered a coalition that included the Bloc of National Minorities.

However, fully ready at Piast's disposal was an economic narrative capable of successfully mobilizing the majority of Polish voters against the National Democrats! According to Rataj, the demand for "a radical social program," and more specifically land reform based on the forced parcellization of large estates, ultimately carried more traction and had greater power to mobilize voters than political anti-Semitism. In a head-on confrontation, the Marshall seemed assured, economic self-interest was a more powerful mobilizing force than the call for hatred. But despite being the son of poor peasants and the deputy of a peasant party, and despite having expressed strong disapproval for anti-Semitism in his private memoirs, Rataj *himself* apparently opted for an alliance with the purveyors of ethnic hatred rather than facing the potentially disruptive effects of radical land reform.

The assassination of Narutowicz, which brought to light the dangerous and destabilizing consequences of the hatred found at the core of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, also failed to shake the moderate Marshall's conviction that radical social reform was a greater danger than political anti-Semitism. In fact, in the days following the murder of Narutowicz, when the election of his successor was being discussed, Rataj became a forceful advocate of the "thesis that the [new presidential] candidate must win with the majority of Polish votes."²⁰

The new presidential election, scheduled for December 20, was promising to be a chaotic affair—much like the election of Narutowicz had been. While the PPS and the National Workers' Party quickly announced that they would vote for any candidate jointly agreed upon by Piast and Liberation, the two peasant parties once again had difficulties reaching agreement. On the night of December 19, it was rumored that Piast itself could not decide between Premier Władysław Sikorski and Stanisław Wojciechowski, while Liberation was still considering eight different candidates, with the former National Civic Union activist Jan Kucharzewski leading the field.²¹

Yet, behind the scenes, Rataj was working hard and holding numerous meetings with representatives on both the left and the right to find a candidate acceptable to the “Polish majority” in the *Sejm*. After a number of consultations, he was able to narrow down the list of candidates to Wojciechowski and Sikorski—both of them centrists, closer to the left but considered acceptable to the right. The Marshall had considerable success with his project and claims to have succeeded in persuading the “moderate” socialists Daszyński, Barlicki, and Moraczewski that only a candidate supported by a Polish majority could succeed in bringing about political stability.²² While Liberation leader Thugutt initially threatened to purposefully find a candidate entirely unacceptable to the right, deep down he had no stomach for another battle against the “Polish Majority.”²³ “Theoretically,” he wrote, “it would have been possible for us to once again have our candidate elected in the fifth round of voting, but I felt that neither I nor the country could take the terrible stress of another five round election.”²⁴ In the end, despite making threatening noises to the contrary, Liberation and Piast ultimately agreed upon the

candidacy of Stanisław Wojciechowski, a centrist who enjoyed both personal historical ties to Piłsudski and good relations with the National Democrats.²⁵

So if Rataj's call for the president to be elected by the "Polish majority" failed, it was the right and not the left which was to blame. Only at 11pm of the night before the election, leaders of the three right-wing clubs decisively announced to Rataj that they would be "unable" to vote for Wojciechowski and proposed their own compromise candidate, the conservative Morawski.²⁶ It would appear that this late decision reflected a victory of the rank and file National Democratic deputies over the parties' more conciliatory leadership.

Thus, the vote promised to be one pitting the left against the right, with the left, again, winning with the support of the national minorities. But again, no one from the parliamentary clubs had visited any of the groups which made up the National Minorities Bloc to discuss tactics or the choice of candidates. Only Piłsudski sent his envoy, Marian Kościalkowski, to inform the minorities of the left's choice of Wojciechowski and to ask for their votes.²⁷ But even at the very last moment Rataj had not given up his quest to make the new president appear more Polish and less Jewish. Mere hours before the election, the Zionist leader Ozjasz Thon received a surprise visit from Marshall of the *Sejm*—it was the only visit by a Polish parliamentarian to the National Minorities' Bloc during the run up to the election. Yet, the purpose of Rataj's visit was not to ask for the Jewish vote. It was, in fact, the very opposite! During the brief discussion Rataj asked the Jews *not* to vote for Wojciechowski and, instead, to formally put forth their own candidate.²⁸

Having a Jewish, or minority, candidate in the election would have accomplished two objectives, both related to the Doctrine of the Polish Majority. First, and most obvious, it would have removed the odium of having been the “Jewish candidate” from Wojciechowski. Second, the presence of another candidate would have allowed a run-off between Wojciechowski and Morawski. This would have given at least some National Democrats one more opportunity to cast their votes for Wojciechowski, thus possibly allowing him to become the candidate of the Polish majority in the runoff.²⁹

In the end, all these machinations came to naught. The minorities uniformly voted for Wojciechowski, as did all Piast deputies, despite many of the latter being “terrified” of the possible consequences and “fully ready” to cast their lot with Morawski.³⁰ As a result, Wojciechowski was elected by the very same combination of votes as Narutowicz. But the right-wing newspapers, and even *Rozwój*, stayed calm. No one called Wojciechowski a “Jewish president” and no demonstrations against him took place in the streets. From this fact, many historians draw the conclusion that the murder of Narutowicz had been a defeat for the National Democrats, who were ultimately forced to scale down their rhetoric and modify their demands.³¹

But such a reading of history is far too superficial. As we have seen in the last chapter, the right did not significantly scale down its demands. Further, the logic behind Rataj’s actions illustrates that the murder and, even more so, the riots of December 11 had a powerful impact on the political thinking of centrist Polish politicians. In Rataj’s memoirs one finds no indication that the Marshall of the *Sejm* had considered the notion a “Polish Majority” to be important to the governance of the country prior to the election

of Gabriel Narutowicz. If anything, prior to the “December Events,” Rataj appears to have judged the legitimacy of political developments primarily in terms of their conformity with the constitution, rather than with the extra-constitutional principle of ethnicity. But in face of the forceful and violent opposition to the participation of the Jews in Narutowicz’s election, Rataj appears to have become convinced that only a “Polish majority,” as it was understood by the National Democrats, was capable of ruling the country.

This decision does not appear to have been motivated by fear for his own personal safety—Rataj had reason to fear for his life on a number of occasions and there is no indication that this changed his political thinking in a significant way.³² Rather, Rataj’s newly found dedication to the principle of the Polish majority appears to have been underpinned by a sophisticated political calculation: that this was the only way to guarantee political stability in Poland without embarking on a socially radical program of land reform. But however pragmatic or moderate the Marshall’s stance may have seemed, it was highly questionable from the vantage point of *his own* moral convictions. In his memoirs, Rataj lamented that despite being sentenced to death, Niewiadomski “had not been morally annihilated” at his trial.³³ Yet, a part of the responsibility for this state of affairs surely rests with Rataj himself who, for the sake of calm and stability, chose to accept a large part of Niewiadomski’s credo.

Rataj was unusually lucid in articulating his bargain with the purveyors of ethnic hatred, but he was far from unique. Sikorski, who as Premier wielded real political power

in the country, appeared to have adopted the same logic. In his first speech before the *Sejm*, on January 19, 1923, the new Premier was presented with the perfect opportunity to condemn the principles in the name of which Niewiadomski had acted. Indeed, he told the *Sejm* that he believed “the evil had to be destroyed at its very root.”³⁴ Yet, in his speech he did not mention these “roots” at all. He spoke elliptically about “December events,” “partisan squabbles,” “the lack of parallelism” between the actions of the left and the right, and the “rendering of the authority of the President and the state laughable.”³⁵ But he said absolutely nothing about the principles which animated both the rioters and Niewiadomski—hatred towards the national minorities, especially the Jews, and the idea that only ethnic Poles could legitimately participate in politics.

The section of his speech dealing with the national minorities was deeply problematic, considering the events which transpired in December. Sikorski promised that Poland would “always and unconditionally” guarantee “its citizens, without regard for any differences, not only safety, peace and equality before the law, but also the freedom for full cultural development, including the safeguarding of linguistic and religious separateness.”³⁶ However, the Premier immediately qualified his own “unconditional” promise by stating that it will “naturally” apply only to those citizens who “sincerely and loyally stand on the ground of unquestionable Polish civic identity [*państwowość*].”³⁷ While Sikorski never explained how the “unquestionableness” of latter could be measured or evaluated, he did have some praise for the Ukrainians and Belarusians.³⁸ But rather than reaffirming the right of the Jews to participate in the political process, which the “December Events” had so obviously raised into question, he

went on to undermine it further. The sole mention of the Jews in his speech was more of a threat than anything else:

On the basis of the above, the Jewish minority will certainly understand that the rights willingly given to it by Poland will be respected by [my] government. However, a voice of caution is necessary. On the Jewish side, the justified defense of rights has too often been turned into a battle for privileges. Some organs of the international press, which judge us too harshly, have called the equality reigning in Poland, oppression. There are no rights without duties. The last years of Polish independence illustrate that not all Polish citizens have adequately understood this sentiment.³⁹

A legitimate argument can be made the Zionist leadership had overreached in its demands on a number of issues, and especially in its foolish advocacy of the 1919 Minorities' Treaty. But this was hardly the appropriate time to enter such a discussion—at least if one really wanted to “destroy the evil” inherent in Niewiadomski’s act “at its very root.” There is no indication that Sikorski was an anti-Semite or that he believed in the existence of a Jewish “threat” to Poland. The real reason for his strange “warning” to the Jews was tactical. According to Singer, Sikorski considered tacit Jewish support for his government to be a political liability and source of embarrassment.⁴⁰ And, like Rataj, he lacked the political courage to live up to his own moral sentiments and “destroy the evil at its roots.”

I have spent some time discussing the political bargain conceptualized by Rataj, as well as the political rhetoric of Sikorski, only because they offer particularly clear examples of a trend which appears to have affected most of Piast deputies and many other influential politicians in what was generally described as the “centre” of the political

spectrum. The new president, Stanisław Wojciechowski, also favored a government by the majority of Polish parties.⁴¹ And despite Witos' high sounding claims that he would not enter into alliances with "people with blood on their hands," talks to form a "Government of the Polish Majority" began almost immediately after the murder of Narutowicz.⁴² These negotiations proceeded along two separate tracks but were, in both cases, sponsored by centrist political figures. On the one hand, Witos and Piast were in intermittent negotiations with the three right-wing parties to form a coalition centre-right government. On the other hand, General Sikorski attempted to gain support for his minority government from the Christian Democrats (or even of the conservative Endek offshoot SChN) and thus create a broad Polish coalition stretching from the PPS to "moderate" elements on the right.⁴³ Marshall Rataj actively participated in both these concurrent efforts.

Ultimately, Sikorski was unable to detach the Christian Democrats from their alliance with the NDs. But it may be important to note that the catalyst for the fall of his government was another entirely contingent event which, again, involved the "Jewish Question." On April 1, 1923 a Polish Catholic priest, Father Konstanty Budkiewicz, was executed for treason in the Soviet Union, on entirely spurious charges. The execution was condemned by all Polish parties and political groups, but it particularly galvanized the National Democrats, who, on April 4, organized a massive rally on Teatralny Square in Warsaw. With a number of National Democratic speakers, among them the *Rozwój* activist Konrad Ilski, delivering diatribes aimed at "communists and Jews" (though the latter obviously had nothing to do with Budkiewicz's execution) it should not be

surprising that Warsaw erupted into an orgy of anti-Jewish violence reminiscent of the one which took place following the election of Narutowicz, though on a somewhat smaller scale.⁴⁴

As the *Kurjer Poranny* announced, “the demonstration, which initially impressed us with its serious character, eventually ended with a series of excesses.”⁴⁵ In an eerie echo of December 11, “groups numbering from a few to a dozen individuals” stopped trams, pulled out and beat up (presumed) Jews, vandalized cinemas, and broke the windows in Jewish stores. “Down with the Jews!” “Beat the Jews!” and “Ten rabbis for one bishop!” were the choice slogans of the demonstrators.⁴⁶ Again, any individuals presumed to be Jews were attacked. Among them, as *Kurjer Polski* reported with outrage, was a certain “Count W.,” whose carriage was attacked by a mob wielding sticks in the vicinity of the Vienna Railway Station.⁴⁷ A Jewish high school student surrounded and beaten up by a hostile mob was saved only by the personal intervention of the ZLN deputy Father Nowakowski.⁴⁸ Army units had to help police control the situation, though the latter showed more resolve and determination than it had in December. In the end, some 40 people were admitted to emergency and 200 arrested.⁴⁹

While it is difficult to measure the *precise* impact of the violence on Piast’s decision to withdraw its support for Sikorski’s government, there is little doubt that the latter’s inability to stave off the execution was a serious blow which precipitated its downfall.⁵⁰ And there is even less doubt that, in the aftermath of the violence, Piast redoubled its efforts to create a “Government of the Polish Majority.” A story of Piast’s

attempt to create such a government was run by *Robotnik* on the day following the riots under the telling title “Illusions.”⁵¹ A mere two weeks later, however, Piast was engaged in serious open talks with the National Democrats and the downfall of Sikorski’s government was universally perceived as being but a matter of time.⁵²

The negotiations, now carried on openly, took another four weeks, with the key stumbling block being Piast’s demand for the new government to commit itself to (moderate) land reform, which was fiercely opposed by the SChN, the junior partner in the National Democratic coalition. In the end, the Government of the Polish Majority was not achieved without some sacrifices on both sides. A group of sixteen left-wing Piast deputies, led by veteran leader Jan Dąbski, formally left the party.⁵³ The SChN declined to formally join the new government, though it promised to support it. Still, less than six months after the assassination of Gabriel Narutowicz, the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, in the name of which he had been murdered, was formally accepted by Piast, the party which played the most decisive role in electing him to the presidency.

The very first point of “The Rules of Cooperation between the Parties of the Polish Parliamentary Majority in the *Sejm*” as the agreement was formally called, stated the following:

The Polish national character must be maintained in the regime and administration of the state. To this end: (1) The basis of the parliamentary majority should be a Polish majority and the government should be made up exclusively of Poles. (2) The Polish language will be declared as the state and administrative language ... on the entire territory of the Republic. ... (3) Polish youth will have the right to study in secondary, post-secondary, and vocational schools in accordance with its share of the population in the state [ie. *numerus clausus*] ... (5) In internal colonization, special attention

shall be paid to areas important from a military and national point of view, especially those where a Polish majority can be created. (6) In all government concessions and contracts, as well as in government jobs, the correct percentage of the Polish population will be adhered to.⁵⁴

Two separate points (four and five) dealt with the question of the eastern Borderlands or *Kresy*, which were basically designated for polonization.⁵⁵ The sixth point promised to increase the privileges of the Catholic Church and ratify the Concordat. The ninth point of the agreement promised to “support Polish industry, crafts, and commerce and the nationalization of cities.”⁵⁶ As Singer put it, in “every article of the Agreement, the Piast deputies, with Witos at their head, murdered Narutowicz all over again.”⁵⁷ The very last point (number eleven) offered Piast the promise of watered down land reform.⁵⁸

While the creation of the Government of the Polish Majority was significant, the discursive change which it signaled was actually more important than its immediate political impact.⁵⁹ Indeed, the coalition fell apart a mere six months after being formed, amidst protests by another group of renegade Piast deputies over the National Democrats’ mismanagement of the economy. Thus, a mere six months after coming into being with such fanfare, “The Government of the Polish Majority” was replaced by a minority cabinet led by the technocrat Władysław Grabski.⁶⁰ But discursive change which took place in the immediate aftermath of election of Narutowicz would prove lasting. Following the murder, not only Piast, but other unaffiliated “moderate” politicians close to the party, such as Sikorski and Wojciechowski, accepted the notion that only a “Polish Majority,” as it was defined by the National Democrats, could successfully rule Poland.

This notion would remain a definitive, if unspoken, component of Piast's political practice and would never be seriously challenged within the party.

This commitment to the Doctrine of the Polish Majority was symbolized by Piast's attitude towards the commemoration of Narutowicz's death. Plans for the commemoration, initiated by Thugutt and Liberation, initially included a statue or a community centre to honor the deceased president. However, due to lack of support among parliamentarians, Liberation eventually had to settle for a commemorative plaque in the *Sejm*.⁶¹ But even those plans were put in jeopardy, when a sizeable group of Piast deputies led by Witos refused to vote for the allocation of funds necessary for the plaque.⁶²

At the eventual unveiling of the plaque, which took place on June 16, 1922, parliamentary leaders from across the political spectrum were present. They included not only Witos, but even the National Democrats Głabiński and Grabski. In lieu of a wreath, the PPS made a charitable donation of one million Polish marks for a "philanthropic cause," which left only two lonely wreaths standing next to the plaque. One, not surprisingly, was from Liberation. The second was provided by the breakaway renegade faction of sixteen Piast deputies who, under Jan Dąbski's leadership, left the party when the latter entered the "Government of the Polish Majority."⁶³ The absence of wreaths from the three right-wing parties was probably not a surprise to anyone. But the lack of a wreath from Piast, which had unanimously voted for Narutowicz and thus set him on the path which led to his death, spoke volumes about just how far the party was willing to go

in order to distance itself from its shameful, even if inadvertent, cooperation with the Jews.

The Left and the Politics of Amnesia

Unlike Piast and likeminded centrists, the Polish left did not openly accept the Doctrine of the Polish Majority in the aftermath of Narutowicz's murder. Especially among the rank and file, there was a lot of anger about the parliamentary leadership's refusal to engage in armed retaliation against the spiritual authors of the murder.⁶⁴ Piłsudski himself was particularly shaken by the assassination of Narutowicz. Even before the murder, during the riots, he was so disturbed as to appear "sick, barely in control of himself."⁶⁵ He resigned his position as Chief of Staff as soon as the ND-Piast government came into existence. As a regular citizen, he felt free to publicly announce the reasons for his antipathy towards the "Government of the Polish Majority." At a banquet held in his honor at the Bristol Hotel shortly after the resignation, he delivered the following speech to his supporters:

Our president was murdered by ... the very same people who also heaped so much dirt, and so much monstrous, base hatred [upon me]. These people committed a crime. They committed murder, punishable by law. Gentlemen, I am a soldier. When I thought that I might as soldier have to defend these people, my conscience wavered. ... And once it wavered, I realized that I can no longer be a soldier. These, gentlemen, are the reasons and motivations for my departure from military service.⁶⁶

According to those who knew him well, for Piłsudski the murder was “a personal tragedy, which he would never be able to shake.”⁶⁷ He became more bitter and quick to anger. And, no doubt, he was sorely disappointed by the nation he had help lead to independence. The extreme and crude language, which would become one his hallmarks in his later years, was fully in evidence in his speech at the Bristol Hotel.⁶⁸ But underneath the anger, a subtle though ultimately important discursive shift could be observed among the Piłsudczyks, socialists, and Liberation radicals. Discursive changes are not always easy to delineate precisely but an analysis of the manner in which the memory of Narutowicz’s election and murder, and the role of the Jews therein, was discussed by left-wing politicians and journalists can shed light this subtle but important transformation. To be sure, there were some writers on the left who were willing to openly discuss what happened. An unusually vivid example is offered by Jan Tarnowski’s article in the December 19 edition of *Kurjer Poranny*:

What in fact did [the right] have against Narutowicz? The fact that he was chosen by a majority of votes, among which were not only purely Polish voices, but also those of the representatives of other peoples which make up the Polish nation. And the fact that a Pole of great knowledge whose name was recognized abroad was elected to the highest office of the Republic with not only Polish votes was seen, in certain political circles, as a slander to the Polish name and an insult to the entire country.⁶⁹

This, indeed, summarized in a few words the true cause of Narutowicz’s murder and of the riots which shook Warsaw in December 1922. Yet, Tarnowski’s article is notable primarily for how exceptional it was in its frank discussion of the issue at hand. It may not be surprising that Rataj patently failed to mention the causes of the murder in his commemorative speech about Narutowicz to the *Sejm*, or that Father Antoni

Szlagowski failed to discuss (or even mention) the Jews and the question of anti-Semitism in his homily at Narutowicz's funeral.⁷⁰ But it should give us some pause to note that left-wing politicians' and writers' attempts to honor Narutowicz's memory were also subject to this troubling collective amnesia. Even the Piłsudczyk National Civic Union, so outspoken in its defense of minorities before the elections, did not mention minorities in its official response to the murder of Narutowicz.⁷¹ It was not the Polish left became more sympathetic towards the National Democrats—if anything the opposite was true. It just appeared to have become unwilling to discuss the role of the Jews in the Polish political community and, more specifically, to even acknowledge the “Minorities’ Question” in the election and murder of the Republic's first president.

The “forgetting” of the Jewish involvement in the election of Narutowicz was already evident at the trial of Niewiadomski. For example, even as the Prosecutor Rudnicki and Civil Attorney Paschalski sought to “showcase” the “moral dimension” of the murder, they could not bring themselves to challenge, or even acknowledge, Niewiadomski's rabid anti-Semitism.⁷² Rudnicki did not mention the Jews once during the trial and allowed all of Niewiadomski's (truly outlandish) anti-Semitic claims to go unanswered.⁷³ Paschalski, for his part, raised the question of the national minorities just once, and did so indirectly. In an attempt to refute the murderer's claim that Narutowicz had made a mistake by accepting the nomination from the hands of the minorities, Paschalski countered that “this was no mistake. “Rather, he claimed, the president bore witness to the tradition of “respect for difference which permeated all of Polish history, and to that noble Poland which held out its hand to Lithuania and Ukraine [and] which

took in the Jews.”⁷⁴ This was the only answer the two attorneys were able to offer to Niewiadomski’s litany of anti-Semitic accusations over the entire course of the trial.

With very few exceptions, such as Tarnowski’s article, the left-wing press also avoided discussing the causes of Narutowicz’s murder. When it was forced to address them, for example during official commemorations of his death, the results could be bizarre. At the six month anniversary of the murder, the *Kurjer Poranny* ran a front-page story discussing the president’s life and death. What followed was a scathing attack on the National Democrats, which accused them of everything from loyalty to the Tsar during the Partitions to treason during the Polish-Bolshevik war. But when it came time to discuss the causes of the president’s death, the article offered a somewhat bizarre new explanation:

What was this quiet, non-partisan man, who was far removed from any social radicalism and raised in aristocratic society ... guilty of? The official answer was this: he took power from the hands of the Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians. But this was a lie, as the election of the second president by the very same coalition proved.⁷⁵

What, then, was the President *really* guilty of? According to *Kurjer Poranny*, the real cause of the right’s hatred was the fact that Narutowicz “acted in the spirit of the same faith that animated Piłsudski,” whereas Wojciechowski was acceptable to the National Democrats because he had cooperated with them during World War I.⁷⁶

The claims of the *Kurjer Poranny* were patently untrue on a number of counts. In the first place, Piłsudski himself had championed the candidacy of Wojciechowski over that of Narutowicz. Secondly, Wojciechowski’s election raised little opposition from the

right because of the violence which had just transpired, and because Warsaw was under a state of emergency. The real cause of the right's hatred for Narutowicz was, of course, the one pointed out by Jan Tarnowski immediately after his death in the very same *Kurjer Poranny*. But the fact that one of Poland's most liberal newspapers would attempt to redefine the causes of the murder, and present them as having had nothing to with the minorities, is most instructive.

The same determination to collectively forget particular aspects of the "December Events," affected Poland's political class. We will recall that on December 12, 1922 all parties drafted resolutions demanding an inquiry into the riots of the previous day. These were wrapped into a single motion and dispatched to the *Sejm's* Administrative Commission for further investigation. The Commission took until June 1923 to deliver its findings, which were presented to the *Sejm* by no other than Stanisław Thugutt, the man almost singlehandedly responsible for persuading Narutowicz to accept the candidacy for the presidency.

But if anyone expected Thugutt to openly discuss the causes of the violence and murder they would be sorely disappointed. Indeed, even Thugutt's summary of the events of December 11 virtually ignored the question of the national minorities or the fact that a good part of the violence was directed against Warsaw's Jewish community. According to Thugutt, the "excesses" consisted of "stopping and insulting deputies, preventing them from fulfilling their obligations in the National Assembly, harassing the representatives of

foreign states, and in this manner not only trampling upon the rule of law in Poland but making Poland into an object embarrassment in the entire civilized world.”⁷⁷

Thugutt claimed that the actual “physical perpetrators” of these events, that is the students from the right-wing militias, were “the least guilty,” due to their age and “level of intellectual development.”⁷⁸ Who, then, bore responsibility for what happened?

According to Thugutt, the primary culprit for the events of December 11 was not a political group, party, or organization but “a certain legal-political theory.”⁷⁹ Such a framing of the issue was bound to please the National Democratic deputies gathered in the *Sejm*. And, indeed, Thugutt’s entire speech was not even once interrupted by heckles from the right—which was highly unusual in the normally raucous parliament. The “theory” which Thugutt had in mind was expressed in conciliatory and legalistic language that effectively stripped his speech of any moral power: The key culprit of the violence was the notion that “every Pole-citizen has the sacred right [to act] over and above the Constitution.”⁸⁰

This formulation was deeply problematic, even if we accept Thugutt’s premise that “theories” could be moral agents and thus be “guilty” or “responsible” for certain political actions. As anyone who read the right-wing press was bound to know, the *real* culprit (again, if theories could be culprits) was not the vague and general notion that citizens had moral responsibilities beyond the Constitution (which Thugutt himself would probably have to accept, if he had thought it through more deeply) but the *highly specific* claim that non-ethnically Polish citizens of Poland had no right to participate in

the political process. This was, in other words, the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, which had been formulated by the National Democrats in the run up to the presidential election and which had so recently been embodied in the “Government of the Polish Majority”. By choosing deliberately obscure and legalistic terms, Thugutt was able to skirt around the most controversial issues and win the support of the entire *Sejm* for his report. But this victory, if it can be called that, came at the cost of purposefully distorting the real causes of the violence and of the president’s murder.

The same thing can be said with regards to the second “culprit” identified by Thugutt—“a certain portion of the Warsaw press.” No newspapers, let alone writers, were identified in Thugutt’s expose. And his admonitions to the press were equally generic and vague: Publicists were accused of “leading a certain portion of the population onto a false path with the help of imprecise logic.”⁸¹ In the end, Thugutt expressed the hope that in the future the press “would be mindful of its great power and not use it for evil ends.”⁸² And while the Liberation leader was highly critical of the police, he argued against any calls for additional investigations into the riots or their causes.⁸³

In his memoirs, Thugutt acknowledged that not everyone was happy with his speech and evidently felt the need to excuse himself for his weak and conciliatory stance. “For the price of being able to tell the right certain sad facts necessary for the improvement of the political climate,” he wrote, “I renounced the ability to say, in the name of the left, everything I could have said if I had rejected compromise.”⁸⁴ If he had said everything he wanted to say, Thugutt went to argue, he could not have spoken in the

name of the entire Administrative Commission.⁸⁵ However, there were two “stronger accents” in Thugutt’s speech. The first, it must be admitted, was his harsh denunciation of the “glorification” of the murderer in churches and the press.⁸⁶ The second “stronger accent” of Thugutt’s speech referred to the Jews—though not quite in the way one may have expected.

In all likelihood, Thugutt would have preferred to ignore the Jewish question entirely, just as he was able to ignore it in discussing the violence of December 11. However, among the motions brought forth on December 12 was one from the Jewish Circle, which demanded the creation of a special parliamentary commission to investigate the role of *Rozwój* “in anti-Jewish pogroms and excesses which have taken place on the lands of Republic over the past four years.”⁸⁷ The resolution could admittedly be construed as being needlessly provocative and offensive to the sensibilities of all Poles, including the left. Not only did it accuse the Poles of “numerous pogroms” in which “hundreds were killed and wounded,” but it also leveled charges that not only the police but also the Prosecutor’s Office and the Ministry of Interior, and thus effectively the Polish state, openly “tolerated even and supported” the anti-Semitic agitation and violence of *Rozwój*.⁸⁸ In a final gratuitously provocative gesture, it demanded criminal charges to be brought against the Minister of Interior, police officials, and prosecutors who were “guilty in the anti-Jewish excesses and pogroms of the last four years.”⁸⁹

The Jewish Circle’s motion was tabled in the immediate aftermath of the December 11 riots, which can perhaps explain its highly emotional tone and unrealistic,

needlessly provocative demands. Thugutt's reply, on the other hand, was made a full six months later in an atmosphere of relative political calm. Yet, reading the text of Thugutt's speech, one gets the distinct impression that he was tougher in dealing with the Jews than with the National Democrats. Indeed, while Thugutt claims that he "wanted to avoid mentioning the names of any parties or individuals," there was one party which he addressed very directly—the Jewish Circle. After making the perfunctory claim that Liberation would always stand in defense of the Jews when they were attacked, Thugutt went on to address the Jewish deputies directly:

I have already had the unpleasant duty of warning you a number of times about the passions which you bring to political life in Poland. ... I do not know anything about numerous pogroms which resulted in hundreds of dead. But I remember very well when I was in Paris in 1919, how a great wave of calumnies and hatreds [sponsored by Jewish politicians] was eroding the foundations of the Polish state. The constant barrage of lies and baseless accusations which fell on Poland in 1919 doubtlessly could not have created good relations between Poland and the Jews. I do not want to argue with you... but I have to let you know that the extraordinary passion with which you approach this subject, as well as the lack of any regard with which you throw your accusations not just against one class or one party but against all of Polish society, will not allow even the Polish left to support your motion.⁹⁰

This is not the place to debate the substance of Thugutt's accusations against Poland's Jewish parliamentarians or the activities and lobbying efforts of particular Jewish leaders in 1919. What is significant is that Thugutt's rebuke of the Jewish Circle was more forceful than his timid and conciliatory critique of the National Democrats' role in the events of December 11. And while it may be true that the motion tabled by the Jewish

Circle was gratuitously offensive, surely there was truth in the words of the Jewish Circle deputy, Schiper, who attempted to defend his party's resolution:

We thought it necessary to underline the [fact]... that the President of Poland was murdered as a Jewish president. ... [National Democratic] demagoguery reduced the question of the first president of the Republic of Poland to the Jewish denominator. We hope to help usher in a new political consciousness among Polish society, the consciousness that the state cannot be built on the foundation of constant warfare against citizens who fulfill their obligations and who demand their rights. ... [T]he same hand that was unpunished after it was raised against the life or health of a Jewish Polish citizen ... was raised against the president of the Republic. ... Anti-Semitism is a danger for the development of the state, a mask under which it is easy to prepare various coups against the rule of law. This is what we want to point out. We want to take a stand against anti-Semitism and we would like the *Sejm* to support our resolution.⁹¹

There is no doubt that Schiper was fundamentally correct. If one really wanted to find an impersonal culprit responsible for the riots of December 11 and the murder of the president, that culprit was anti-Semitism which motivated, at the deepest levels, both Niewiadomski and the student demonstrators from Three Crosses' Square. Thus, if one wanted to present an honest assessment of the events which took place between December 9 and December 16, to "eradicate the evil at its very roots" or to "morally annihilate Niewiadomski," the question of anti-Semitism *had* to be addressed. And if there was ever a time to take a stand against anti-Semitism in Polish political life, surely the discussion of the murder of Narutowicz was that time.

Yet, aside from Thugutt's rebuke of the Jewish Circle, no Polish parliamentarian even mentioned the Jews in the discussion of these events. Nocznicki, another Liberation

deputy who spoke after Thugutt, bemoaned the “atmosphere of hatred towards the lawful order in the state.”⁹² The PPS deputy Pragier blamed the right for “preparing the demonstrations, which prepared the death blow delivered against the president.”⁹³ Anusz, a deputy of the breakaway Piast faction which refused to join the Government of the Polish Majority, complained that the right “failed to find a single word of disapproval for the murder and has instead undertaken a relentless and systematic effort to glorify it.”⁹⁴ But none of them discussed the *causes* of the extraordinary hatred which manifested itself against the president. And none of them even uttered the words “Jews” or “anti-Semitism.”

The apparent desire to forget the role of the Jews in the election and murder of Narutowicz was related to a more significant though more subtle discursive shift which occurred in the Polish press in the aftermath of December 16. As we will recall from Chapter VII, prior to the presidential elections left-wing papers and journals, such as *Głos Prawdy*, *Robotnik*, *Kurjer Poranny*, and *Kurjer Polski*, offered a spirited and sophisticated defense of the national minorities’ right to participate in the political process. To be sure, the Polish left-wing press never backtracked on these claims—it just stopped to air them. After December 16, the very few articles which explicitly defended this position inevitably began with declarations reaffirming the nature of Poland as *primarily* a state for the Poles.⁹⁵ The Piłsudczyks, who now remained the only public champions of the right of the minorities to participate in political life, also seemed to realize that they were fighting an uphill battle. One of the authors, who used the penname “Old Fellow” perhaps to show the anachronism of his views, fully acknowledged that “the demagogical doctrine ... which

states that the representatives of national minorities cannot take part in the government” had now become “popular even beyond reactionary circles.”⁹⁶

The Jewish Question Revisited

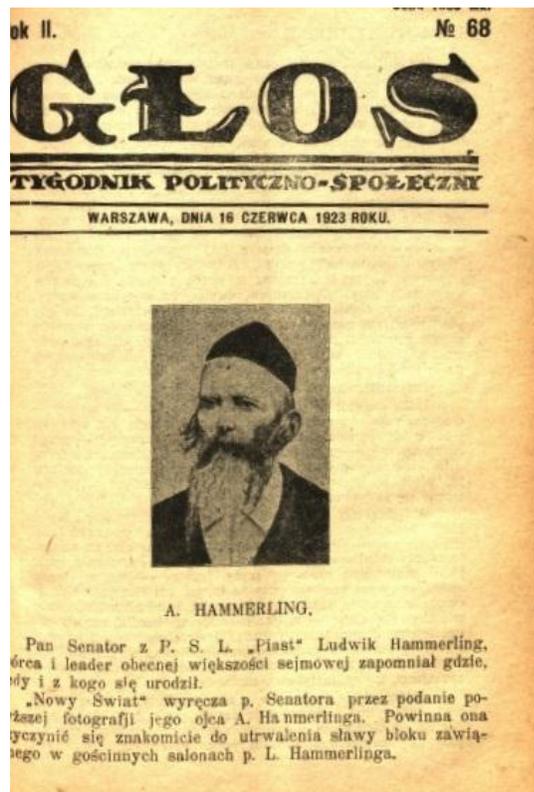
But if serious discussions of the “Minorities Question” in Polish parliamentary politics seemed to have all but disappeared from the pages of the left-wing press in the aftermath of the Narutowicz murder, the “Jewish Question” continued to make an appearance in a somewhat different and more disturbing context. While the strategy of using the “Jewish Question” in order to embarrass the right was not entirely new, it certainly accelerated after the murder of Narutowicz.⁹⁷ In fact, following the murder, the Jews became a staple of the left’s rhetorical arsenal and were routinely used to embarrass and discredit the right. For example, almost immediately after the murder of Narutowicz, *Głos Prawdy* published a list of business transactions carried out between the anti-Semitic *Rozwój* society and Jewish merchants.⁹⁸ Spurious speculations about the National Democrats seeking Jewish support for the “Government of the Polish Majority” were printed in left-wing newspapers.⁹⁹ Attacks on individual National Democratic politicians were made easier by the fact that many of them, including some of the most outspoken Polish anti-Semites like Adolf Nowaczyński or Stanisław Stroński, really did have recent and well documented Jewish ancestry.¹⁰⁰ Reminding everyone of the latter’s Jewish roots became a staple strategy of Jewish Circle deputies themselves.¹⁰¹ Such attacks were often extremely effective. As Singer writes:

There was no lack of reminding Stroński of his Jewish roots. This was one of the most effective ways of combating an outstanding anti-Semitic activist. Stroński answered all attacks directed against him quickly and wittily. Only the epithet “Jew” was always left hanging in the air without any answer.¹⁰²

The results of such tactics could often be bizarre. While the left rarely explicitly attacked the principle that only a Polish majority could legitimately constitute the country’s government, it quickly turned out that one of the most effective ways to attack the “Government of the Polish Majority” was to highlight the latter’s (very tenuous) Jewish connection.¹⁰³ The matter was helped by the fact that one of the negotiators on the Piast side was Senator Ludwik Hammerling, a rich businessman and landowner, who was a first generation Jewish convert to Catholicism. Some of the discussions between Piast and the National Democrats took place on his estate near the village of Lanckorona. Even though the final agreement was signed in Warsaw, the awkwardly named “Rules of Cooperation between the Parties of the Polish Parliamentary Majority in the *Sejm*” almost immediately became known as the *Pakt Lanckoroński* or Lanckorona Pact. The label was a sore spot for both the right and Piast, and Hammerling’s involvement in the negotiations was subsequently minimized by politicians such as Witos.¹⁰⁴ The source of embarrassment was twofold. First, the Lanckorona appellation, with its connotation of rural great estates was embarrassing for a peasant party like Piast. A bigger source of embarrassment, however, was Ludwik Hammerling’s Jewish ancestry, which was immediately exploited by the left. *Głos Prawdy*, which rarely contained any illustrations, ran a photo of Hammerling’s father, an orthodox Jew, on its cover. The caption under the

photo simply stated that Senator Hammerling had evidently forgotten “where and from whom he was born” and that *Głos Prawdy* would like to remind him by printing a picture of his father.

Figure X.1 Cover of *Głos Prawdy* from June 16, 1923.



Attacks such as the ones described above were not intended to be anti-Semitic (though today we would judge them as such). Rather, their goal was to mock anti-Semites and to expose “the dubious morality of the anti-Semitic enterprise.”¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, they certainly led down a slippery slope and in certain cases could become very problematic. For example, shortly after the murder of Narutowicz, the Liberation backbencher Józef Sanocja published a somewhat rambling book entitled “Those Guilty of the Crime”

(*Winowajcy Zbrodni*), which was a scathing attack on the National Democrats. In the book, Sanocja debunked many of the charges leveled by the National Democrats against the deceased president, including the claim that he had been “elected by the Jews.” However, presumably to bolster the left’s “Polish credentials,” Sanocja posed the following question:

[The National Democrats] have a thousand times insulted the entire workers’ and peasants’ movement as being Jewish. But what’s the real story with the Jews? Who brought the Jews to Poland? Who made Poland into a protector of Jews from around the world?¹⁰⁶

His answer was that the Jews were brought to Poland by the nobility, whose class interests were now represented by the National Democrats.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the right was “guilty” of bringing the Jews to Poland. Clearly, even though Sanocja was attempting to attack the right, he was operating in the conceptual universe of the latter and was enthralled to the discourse of the Polish Majority. The problem for him was not anti-Semitism but, just as for the National Democrats, “the Jews.”

But even if we disregard Sanocja’s case, which was not representative of the Polish left, the rhetorical usage of the “Jewish Question” as a *weapon* against the right illustrates the left’s tacit acquiescence to the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, and the extraordinary power which the latter had achieved a relatively short time after being formulated. Most importantly, the usage of the “Jewish Question” to embarrass the right, even when done in a tongue-in-cheek manner and with the best intentions (which was not always the case), and even if engaged in by Jewish politicians themselves, tacitly validated a central

thesis of National Democratic discourse—that the Jews were a problem. Such arguments were especially problematic given that the left had drastically limited its advocacy for the participation of the minorities in the political process. Therefore, by ceasing to publicly challenge the Doctrine of the Polish Majority and by using the “Jewish Question” as something to be deployed against one’s political opponents in order to embarrass them, the Polish left was effectively allowing the National Democratic brand of nationalist and anti-Semitic discourse to become the dominant, if not yet hegemonic, mode of speaking publicly about the nation.

The most troubling implications of this development were still in the future, but they were foreshadowed by one of the most interesting and controversial articles ever published by *Droga*, the Piłsudczyks’ theoretical organ.¹⁰⁸ The short article in question was prefixed by a special and highly unusual editorial note which stated that while the editors “disagreed with many of the views expressed by the author,” they were compelled to “admit that he framed a number of issues correctly and valued the freshness and sincerity of his thought.” In sum, they decided to print the article, without endorsing its contents, as a “valuable material for discussion.” The article, entitled “Of the Left, Right, and so-called Fascists” was signed only with the initials A.N-A., which leads to the intriguing possibility that the author was no other than the right-wing publicist Adolf Nowaczyński, who had been briefly thrown in jail for his portrayal of Niewiadomski as a hero and a martyr.¹⁰⁹

The article was indeed remarkable for its insightful and succinct discussion of the internal contradictions of Piłsudczyk thought. For example A.N-A. wrote:

Every day, your “liberalism” is contradicted by your calls for repressions against speculators and “Endeks.” Your pacifism is contradicted by your “great power politics” (especially directed against Russia), which is mentioned so frequently by activists from the POW and PPS. Your “republicanism” contradicts your often blind devotion to Piłsudski, who is doubtlessly an exceptional person but one who has committed many errors. Your “civic instinct” is in some strange way reconciled with calls for subversive political strikes. Your “democratism” is full of contradictions¹¹⁰

Indeed the author brilliantly highlighted many of the deep cleavages which could be easily reconciled while the Piłsudczyks were in opposition, but which would lead to serious schisms within the movement after it had seized power in 1926. The article’s central thesis, however, was that the radicals among the Polish left and right were, despite superficial impressions to the contrary, converging on many points. Most Poles, the author argued, were tired of the partisanship of established political parties on both the right and left and wanted a (presumably non-democratic) “government of real patriots.”¹¹¹ The deep division of Poland into two camps was an “illusion.” However, a number of issues stood in the way of the left and right coming together. The left, A.N-A. argued, had to stop “holding on to the constitution in a doctrinaire manner” and give up its “cult of the eight hour workday, which lowers productivity.”¹¹²

Still, the two biggest issues dividing the Polish left and right appeared to be historical hatred and the “Jewish Question.” On the latter matter, the Piłsudczyks were on the losing side of history. Most Poles, A.N-A. argued, wanted to show that “we” rather than “enemy elements” were in charge in the country. Fortunately, he claimed, the left

was now “turning against the Jews.” “Even radical socialist workers,” he went on, were now “anti-Semites in private” and it was high time for the left to “stop defending” the principle of “equal rights for the Jews.”¹³ If that could be achieved, then radical left-wing organizations like the POW or the paramilitary Piłsudczyk group *Strzelec* (Marksman) would not appear all that different from the right-wing student groups which made up the most militant core of the nationalist movement.

The author admitted that the latter groups had, from the perspective of the left, committed the “original sin” of “creating the setting for the mad and unfortunate act of Niewiadomski.”¹⁴ He also acknowledged that many right-wing leaders had been shamefully slavish during the Partitions. But he promised that the youth would no longer allow themselves to be manipulated and used for partisan purposes by the parliamentary representatives of the right. Deep down, their desires “for action for the entire nation ... and for building the Polish state ... through the work of the Poles alone” were a pure and justified. In service of this goal, the right-wing youth groups would be willing to “stand with a clear sense of discipline, duty, and solidarity.”¹⁵

The article ended with a half-exhortation and half-threat to the left. According to A.N-A, the right now had the hearts of the majority of Polish youth, just as the Piłsudczyks had them before WWI. “He who believes in the healthy instinct of the Polish race,” the author concluded somewhat ominously, “will draw his conclusions from this fact.”¹⁶ If the author was indeed Nowaczyński, then his proposal to the left was exactly the same, albeit delivered in a very different tone, as the one expressed in his infamous

article “Testament,” which had landed him in jail.¹¹⁷ In that article, published by the ultra-nationalist *Myśl Narodowa*, Nowaczyński had expressed the hope that Niewiadomski’s last “noble” words would convert Piłsudski to the gospel of anti-Semitism.¹¹⁸ What he was advocating, therefore, was an alliance of the radical elements among both the left and the right built around the platform of anti-Semitism, authoritarian politics, and an activist though evolutionary commitment of the state to social and economic reform.

To bring about national unity and broaden their base of support, the author intimated, the Piłsudczyks had to get over the death of Narutowicz and embrace anti-Semitism. Admittedly, his short article could be seen as an isolated oddity or aberration. *Droga*, under the editorial direction of Adam Skwarczyński, would not make its peace with either anti-Semitism or the National Democrats. And the alliance advocated by the mysterious author was unthinkable as long as Piłsudski remained in charge of his followers. As is well known, after coming to power in a coup in 1926, the Marshall forcefully resisted ever increasing calls by the right for the implementation of anti-Semitic legislation. But a mere two years after the Piłsudski’s death, a group of his successors created the Camp of National Unity (*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*), an organization which openly welcomed political anti-Semitism and was created precisely to reach out to radical elements among the nationalist right.¹¹⁹ *Droga*’s publication of A.N-A’s article during the period in which the left was for the first time showing an unspoken acquiescence in the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, was the first flirtation of the Piłsudczyk movement with the anti-Semitic nationalism to which it would succumb after the Marshall’s death.

¹ SSRP no. 4, December 14, 1922, 11-12.

² SSRP no. 4, December 14, 1922, 16.

³ This was the argument made by the Marshall of the first *Sejm*, the National Democrat Wojciech Trąpczyński. "Z krzyżem przeciw Chrystusowi," *Kurjer Polski* December 14, 1922.

⁴ SSRP no. 4, December 14, 1922, 5.

⁵ According to the *Kurjer Polski*, the Socialist deputy Żuławski yelled out that Brownsford should be hung instead of the cross. However, this remark finds no confirmation in the official minutes of the proceedings of the *Sejm*. "Z krzyżem przeciw Chrystusowi," *Kurjer Polski*, December 14, 1922.

⁶ According the newspaper's logic, a disrespectful heckle made by a Jew is more insulting than the very same heckle made by a socialist, and the Jews should do everything in their power to avoid even the slightest shade of suspicion falling on them. "O krzyż w sali posiedzeń," *Kurjer Polski*, December 14, 1922.

⁷ The paper's advice was for the left to swallow its objections, lower their heads, and avoid "provoking" the right.

⁸ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 128-129. For Narutowicz's attempts to reach out to the right, see Nałęcz and Nałęcz, "Gabriel Narutowicz, prezydent Rzeczypospolitej 14XIII-16XIII 1922," 46-47.

⁹ Hołówko, *Prezydent Gabrjel Narutowicz*, 107.

¹⁰ We will recall from Chapter V that Narutowicz had suggested Zamoyski, the moderate National Democrat, as the best candidate for the presidency.

¹¹ "Ostatni wywiad z prezydentem Narutowiczem," *Kurjer Polski* December 17, 1922.

¹² Bernard Singer, "Bohater złotego środka," *Nasz Przegląd*, July 25, 1929 quoted in Singer, *Od Witosa do Sławka*, 44.

¹³ "Zamordowanie prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Gabrjela Narutowicza," *Kurjer Polski*, December 17, 1922.

¹⁴ Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 606 note 40a.

¹⁵ See Chapter VI.

¹⁶ Singer, "Bohater złotego środka."

¹⁷ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 127.

¹⁸ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 127.

¹⁹ Ost, "Politics as the Mobilization of Anger." See my discussion of Ost's framework in Chapter VI.

²⁰ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 132.

²¹ "Kluby sejmowe i dzisiejszy wybór," *Kurjer Poranny*, December 20, 1922.

²² Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 132.

²³ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 132.

²⁴ In all likelihood, Liberation could have repeated its success from the first election, beating the Piast candidate with the support of the Bloc, and the National Democratic one with the support of the Bloc, PPS, and Piast. Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 88.

²⁵ The candidacy of Wojciechowski actually represented a concession by Piast. While it was Piast which had put forth Wojciechowski in the first election, after Narutowicz's murder the party shifted its support to Sikorski. Both men were considered politically centrist, but Wojciechowski had little support of his own and was a personal friend of Piłsudski, who had supported his candidacy. Sikorski, on the other hand, had considerable support of his own, was considered to be genuinely independent, and could be construed as a rival to Piłsudski. Therefore, Piast's preference for Sikorski over Wojciechowski is significant. It would seem to support Pobóg-Malinowski's claim and indicate that Piast was slowly withdrawing its support from Piłsudski. At any rate, it should not be surprising that the Piłsudczyk Liberation vetoed the choice of Sikorski. See Thugutt's discussion with Witos in Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 88.

²⁶ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 133.

²⁷ Singer, "Mordowanie po śmierci."

²⁸ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 133.

²⁹ Głębiński, Korfanty, and Chaciński intimated to Rataj that if there was a run-off, some rightwing deputies may be willing to cast their votes for Wojciechowski. Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 133.

³⁰ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 33. Witos subsequently claimed that he too was ready to vote for Morawski, but this would not have been acceptable to the party's left-wing.

³¹ For example, Nałęcz and Nałęcz, "Gabriel Narutowicz, prezydent Rzeczypospolitej 14XIII-16XIII 1922," 48.

³² Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 132-133.

³³ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 138.

³⁴ SSRP no. 7, January 19, 1923, 6.

³⁵ SSRP no. 7, January 19, 1923, 6-7.

³⁶ SSRP no. 7, January 19, 1923, 11.

³⁷ SSRP no. 7, January 19, 1923, 11.

³⁸ SSRP no. 7, January 19, 1923, 12.

³⁹ SSRP no. 7, January 19, 1923, 12.

⁴⁰ Singer, "Mordowanie po śmierci."

⁴¹ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 134.

⁴² Maj, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy*, 75.

⁴³ Indeed, Sikorski began secret meetings with moderate National Democratic leaders as early as December 19 and was open to other concessions in order to win them over for supporting his government. Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 133-134. The hope of making an alliance with the Christian National Party (SChN) may seem surprising and requires some explanation. Although the SChN was more conservative and thus often considered more "right-wing" than the People's National Union (ZLN), its conservatism was, in fact, of a more traditional kind. As a result it was less radical than the ZLN and relatively more focused on preserving the economic status quo than on identity politics. In the aftermath of the 1926 coup, a part of the SChN broke its alliance with the ZLN and attempted to cozy up to Piłsudski's *Sanacja* regime.

⁴⁴ "Po haniebnym mordzie Sowietkim," *Kurjer Poranny*, April 6, 1923.

⁴⁵ “Po haniebnym mordzie Sowieckim.”

⁴⁶ “Wczorajsze manifestacje,” *Robotnik*, April 6, 1923.

⁴⁷ “Wczorajsza manifestacja protestująca,” *Kurjer Polski*, April 6, 1923.

⁴⁸ “Wczorajsza manifestacja protestująca.”

⁴⁹ “Po haniebnym mordzie Sowieckim.”

⁵⁰ According to Pobóg-Malinowski, the execution of Budkiewicz provided the ultimate impetus for the fall of Sikorski’s government and for the agreement between Piast and the National Democrats. The successful visit of France’s Marshall Foch gave it a few more weeks of existence but its fate was effectively sealed. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, 612.

⁵¹ “Złudzenia,” *Robotnik*, April 6, 1922.

⁵² “Atmosfera przesileniowa w gmachu Sejmowym,” *Kurjer Poranny*, April 21, 1923.

⁵³ This short lived party, named PSL-*Jedność Ludowa* (Polish Peasants’ Party—People’s Unity) would eventually join Liberation.

⁵⁴ Szymon Rudnicki and Piotr Wróbel, eds., “Zasady współpracy stronnictw polskiej więkrzości parlamentarnej w Sejmie w roku 1923, tak zwany Pakt Lanckoroński,” in *Druga Rzeczpospolita: wybór tekstów źródłowych* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1990), 124.

⁵⁵ Rudnicki and Wróbel, “Zasady współpracy,” 126.

⁵⁶ Rudnicki and Wróbel, “Zasady współpracy,” 128.

⁵⁷ Singer, “Mordowanie po śmierci.”

⁵⁸ Rudnicki and Wróbel, “Zasady współpracy,” 130.

⁵⁹ The formation of the “Government of the Polish Majority” led Piłsudski to resign from his post as Chief of Staff and enter a self-imposed retirement. Another high profile resignation was that of Szymon Askenazy, the Jewish Polish historian who had acted as the Republic’s ambassador to the League of Nations since 1919.

⁶⁰ Władysław was the younger brother of the National Democratic leader Stanisław Grabski, but was considered to be a non-partisan technocrat and was highly respected by the left.

⁶¹ Singer, “Mordowanie po śmierci.”

⁶² According to Rataj, the majority of Piast deputies went along with the leader of the party’s leftwing, Dąbski, and defied Witos. Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 160.

⁶³ “Odsłonięcie tablicy pierwszego prezydenta w Sejmie,” *Kurjer Poranny*, June 16, 1923.

⁶⁴ See Chapter VI.

⁶⁵ Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 127.

⁶⁶ Józef Piłsudski, “Przemówienie na bankiecie w Hotelu Bristol (3 lipca 1923 r.),” in *Pisma zbiorowe*, ed. by Kazimierz Świtalski, vol. 6 (Warszawa: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1937), 24.

⁶⁷ Jędrzejewicz, *Józef Piłsudski*, 129.

⁶⁸ During the speech Piłsudski lashed out at the “disgusting dwarves creeping out of our [Polish] swamp ... with souls full of excrement,” who spat upon him and sought to

destroy or befoul anyone close to him. Piłsudski, “Przemówienie na bankiecie w Hotelu Bristol (3 lipca 1923 r.),” 32.

⁶⁹ Jan Tarnowski had been Narutowicz’s personal secretary. Jan Tarnowski, “Szał czy opętanie?” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 19, 1922.

⁷⁰ “Mowa żałobna,” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 23, 1922; SSRP no. 5, December 21, 1922.

⁷¹ “Odezwa Unji Nar-Pan,” *Kurjer Poranny*, December 18, 1922.

⁷² Rataj, *Pamiętniki*, 138.

⁷³ See Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*.

⁷⁴ Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 86.

⁷⁵ “Hołd pamięci pierwszego Prezydenta Polski,” *Kurjer Poranny*, June 16, 1923.

⁷⁶ “Hołd pamięci pierwszego Prezydenta Polski.”

⁷⁷ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 5.

⁷⁸ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 6.

⁷⁹ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 6.

⁸⁰ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 7.

⁸¹ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 8.

⁸² SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 8.

⁸³ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 12.

⁸⁴ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 90.

⁸⁵ Thugutt, *Autobiografia*, 90.

⁸⁶ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 14-15.

⁸⁷ “Wniosek nagły posłów z Koła Żydowskiego w sprawie zaburzeń ulicznych i bezczynności władzy w dniu 11 grudnia 1922 r,” Druk Sejmu RP/II/1/53, 2.

⁸⁸ It should also be pointed out that the usage of the word “pogrom” in the Polish context was anathema to the left. According to the Russian usage, which the Polish left continued to employ, a pogrom was an anti-Jewish action fomented or abetted by the state. The Polish left uniformly claimed, not quite correctly, that even rogue organs of the Polish state never engaged in these kinds of activities.

⁸⁹ Wniosek nagły posłów z Koła Żydowskiego w sprawie zaburzeń ulicznych i bezczynności władzy w dniu 11 grudnia 1922 r. Druk *Sejmu RP/II/1/53*, 2. For more on the minorities treaty and pogroms in Poland see Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁹⁰ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 13-14.

⁹¹ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 27-28.

⁹² SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 16.

⁹³ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 20.

⁹⁴ SSRP no. 48, June 19, 1923, 29.

⁹⁵ Thus, Leon Wasilewski began his article by contrasting Poland, “a Polish nation state,” with Czechoslovakia, “a state of nationalities.” Stpiczyński wrote that he had no desire to defend those nationalities “which were themselves contaminated by nationalism.” “Old Fellow” acknowledged that Poland was “first and foremost for the

Poles,” but claimed that “no good farmer can allow a third of his farm to go to waste.” Leon Wasilewski, “Zadania polskiej polityki narowościowej,” *Droga*, April 1923, 24; Old Fellow, “Zadania polskiej polityki narowościowej,” *Droga*, July 1923, 27; Wojciech Stipczyński, “Trudności pojednania,” *Głos Prawdy*, December, 30, 1922, 757.

⁹⁶ Old Fellow, “Zadania polskiej polityki narowościowej,” 30.

⁹⁷ See, for examples, see the fake National Democratic flyers discussed in Chapter VI.

⁹⁸ “Operacje handlowe Rozwoju,” *Głos Prawdy*, March 2, 1923, 925-928.

⁹⁹ “Większość Chjney z Żydami bez Piasta,” *Kurjer Poranny*, May 17, 1923.

¹⁰⁰ “Błazen Judei,” *Głos Prawdy*, March 10, 1923. Both Stroński and Nowaczyński had Jewish mothers.

¹⁰¹ SSRP no. 5, December 14, 1922, 13.

¹⁰² Bernad Singer, “Profesor Stroński,” *Nasz Przegląd*, May 25, 1929 quoted in Singer, *Od Witosza do Sławka*, 102.

¹⁰³ Left-wing publications generally put the term “Polish Majority” in quotations marks. Yet, while the new government was castigated on numerous grounds, the *principle* of the Polish majority was hardly ever openly attacked. For example Norbert Barlicki, “Rząd ‘większości narodowej’ i parlament,” *Droga*, January 1, 1924, 16-22.

¹⁰⁴ Witos, *Moje wspomnienia*, 27, 43.

¹⁰⁵ “Błazen Judei.”

¹⁰⁶ Józef Sanocja, *Winowajcy Zbrodni* (Warszawa: S.N., 1923), 23-24.

¹⁰⁷ Sanocja, *Winowajcy Zbrodni*, 23-24.

¹⁰⁸ “A. N-A,” “O lewicy, prawicy, i tzw. faszystach,” *Droga*, November 1923, 30.

¹⁰⁹ Nowaczyński was known to sign his articles A.N or A.N.A. Moreover, the appearance of his article in *Droga* may not be as surprising as it initially appears. Nowaczyński prided himself on his ability to rise above partisan lines and was less doctrinaire than most National Democrats. His fierce commitment to anti-Semitism notwithstanding, he was known to publish in the journal *Wiadomości Literackie* which was the literary home of leftist Polish-Jewish writers like Julian Tuwim and Antoni Słonimski and was edited by another assimilated Jewish Pole Mieczysław Grydzewski. *Droga*, for its part, also attempted to present itself as a non-partisan forum of ideas, rather than as the doctrinaire organ of a specific party. The content of the article was certainly in line with Nowaczyński’s thought, though presented in a much more moderate manner than his rants in *Myśl Narodowa*.

¹¹⁰ “A. N-A,” “O lewicy,” 31.

¹¹¹ “A. N-A,” “O lewicy,” 32.

¹¹² “A. N-A,” “O lewicy,” 32.

¹¹³ “A. N-A,” “O lewicy,” 32.

¹¹⁴ “A. N-A,” “O lewicy,” 33.

¹¹⁵ “A. N-A,” “O lewicy,” 33.

¹¹⁶ “A. N-A,” “O lewicy,” 33.

¹¹⁷ See Chapter IX.

¹¹⁸ See Chapter VI.

¹¹⁹ For an account of this transformation see Paruch, *Od konsolidacji państwowej do konsolidacji narodowej*. While Paruch admirably discusses the changing views among the Piłsudczyks, he does not discuss the causes of these changes.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion

The “Government of the Polish Majority,” inaugurated with so much fanfare in June 1923, fell a mere six months later amidst internal squabbles between Piast and the three ChZJN parties over its mismanagement of the economy.¹ In December of that year, the secession of a small group of disillusioned Piast deputies ultimately deprived the “Polish Majority” of its majority in the *Sejm*, and sealed its fate. Witos’ government was duly replaced by a technocratic minority cabinet headed by the non-partisan and universally respected Władysław Grabski, who teetered on more or less successfully until 1925, thus becoming the longest serving premier in democratic Poland. Following its collapse (and the much quicker demise of its short lived successor), the National Democrats were able to once again reach a coalition agreement with smaller parties. To make up for the defections from Piast, which scuttled the last coalition, the NDs were finally able to entice the National Workers’ Party to join the new “Polish majority.” A new coalition government of the NDs, the rump Piast, and NPR was announced on May 10, 1926.

But this new “Government of the Polish Majority” was not destined to rule for long. A mere two days after its inauguration, Eligiusz Niewiadomski’s curious prophecy was fulfilled almost exactly to the letter. Just as the murderer of Narutowicz had

predicted, Piłsudski took a stand “at the head of street thugs, paramilitaries, and regular army units in the fight against the nationalist camp.”² At the cost of over 300 dead and the risk of all-out civil war, the Marshall brought down the government of his despised enemies and seized power for himself. Five days after taking power, Witos’ government formally resigned. So did Piłsudski’s old friend, President Wojciechowski, who refused to recognize the legitimacy of the coup. After four years in the political wilderness, the Piłsudczyks were presented with the opportunity to create the national community they had imagined since before 1918. They certainly had ample time to bring their plans into reality, as they would continue to rule the Second Republic for the remainder of its existence. The National Democrats would never again mount a serious bid for power.

Since the Piłsudczyks defeated their rivals so decisively, it may appear that the murder of Narutowicz ultimately had little impact on the outcome of the political struggle in interwar Poland. At most, the argument could be made that it was illustrative of the organizational and political failures of the National Democrats, who proved so spectacularly inept at converting their ability to mobilize supporters into concrete political outcomes.

A similar argument could be made with regards to the outcome of the cultural struggle between the “civic” and “ethnic” conceptions of the nation, which had been taking place within the discursive field of Polish nationalism. Indeed, it is possible that many readers have by now come to the conclusion that Piast’s outright acceptance of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority following the murder of Narutowicz, as well as the

Piłsudczyks' more subtle *de facto* acquiescence, were little more than responses to grassroots or popular sentiments felt by most Poles. In this interpretation, the election of Narutowicz may have indeed brought popular anti-Semitism to the attention of the political elite but was not, in itself, a significant factor in understanding its ultimate triumph. Thus, it may not be surprising that most historians see the murder of Narutowicz as little more than a footnote in interwar Polish history.

I will now attempt to briefly summarize the argument presented in this dissertation: That contrary to what scholars have until now assumed, the murder of Narutowicz *was* in fact a fundamental turning point in Polish history, which not only brought latent forces or sentiments to the fore but was imbued with considerable causative power in its own right. The departure point for this analysis is William Sewell's observation regarding the importance of contingent events in understanding discursive transformations. In Chapter III we saw that, far from being something timeless or inherent in Polish political culture, anti-Semitic sentiments actually emerged in response to the actions of specific political actors and, perhaps more important, in political contexts where the interests of the "Poles" and "Jews" appeared to be locked in a zero sum game. Elections under Russian rule, with their skewed electoral franchise and a limited number of seats, repeatedly created such situations, and led to veritable explosions of anti-Semitic sentiment in Polish society.

To say that anti-Semitism would have become a powerful force in Polish politics *anyway*, regardless of the political situation, is to engage in counterfactual history. The

fact remains that it was not a major force prior to the Duma elections, but became one immediately afterwards. The elections obviously played a pivotal role in this cultural discursive transformation. What would have happened if history had been different is anyone's guess—and it is foolish to assume that any particular outcome was inevitable.

As I tried to show in Chapters VI, VII, and VIII the same dynamic held true for 1922 elections. While Chapter VI showed that the National Democrats had already made the decision to run their campaign with anti-Semitism as their key message, the 1922 parliamentary and presidential elections created a situation in which the minorities *really* did appear to be the kingmakers of the Polish political scene. This highly contingent outcome acted to validate the National Democratic interpretation of Polish political life as a struggle between “Poles” and “Jews.” Given the institutional framework of Polish democracy and the specific results of parliamentary elections, the presidential election was simply tailor-made to be exploited by advocates of anti-Semitism eager to convince Poles that the Jews were plotting to take over their country.

Furthermore, as I show in Chapter VII, the emergence of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority, which played such an enormous role in mobilizing the National Democrats' followers and in forcing the left to back down in its defense of a (relatively) inclusive conception of Poland, can only be understood in the context of the particular and highly contingent outcome of the election. While the NDs had been fully committed to political anti-Semitism for well over a decade, the election's results played right into their narrative of a Jewish takeover of Poland, appeared to vindicate their most paranoid fears,

and allowed them to present what had previously been a vague and mysterious scepter as a concrete and specific threat.

Of course, it is possible and even highly likely that anti-Semitism would have triumphed in Polish politics regardless. But *precisely* how history would have unfolded is anyone's guess. What can be said with certainty is that the Doctrine of the Polish Majority would not have been formulated if the outcome of the 1922 parliamentary elections was even slightly different. Nor would it have assumed such a prominent place in Polish political discourse, if the presidential election had unfolded differently (that is if the left had united around a single, well known, and popular candidate).

Further, it must be pointed out that the student thugs who briefly ruled Warsaw on December 11 did *not* represent the majority of "ethnic" Polish society which, as we will recall, gave the National Democrats less than 39% of its votes. To say that the Polish left capitulated in the face "popular" anti-Semitism is simply not true. From Chapters VIII, IX, and X we will recall that it was the political *leaders* of Piast and the left who counseled acquiescence and "moderation," against the more radical demands of the grassroots.

The impact of the Narutowicz election and murder was profound, and could be felt on both the left and the right. Contrary to what all Polish historians have argued until now, the crisis which ended in the assassination of president was actually a victory for the National Democrats. As I argued in Chapter VII, the hatreds unleashed during the parliamentary elections of 1922, assumed an entirely new focus during the weeks preceding the presidential election. And in the aftermath of the election of Narutowicz, as

I showed in Chapter VIII, all Poles witnessed the extraordinary power of hateful anti-Semitic nationalism to mobilize its adherents. Perhaps most importantly, the hateful sentiments and rhetoric which led to the murder of the president were never repudiated by the National Democratic elite. As I show in Chapter IX, even the murderer was very quickly accepted as a nationalist hero and martyr. His trial and execution, as covered by the major right-wing newspapers, actually provided the right with the opportunity to reaffirm the legitimacy of the principles in the name of which the president was murdered. Even if the murder was a short-term political setback, there is no doubt that it was a long term discursive victory.

To understand the real nature and profound significance of this victory we must look at the center and left of the political spectrum, and the surprisingly quick surrender of the entire Polish political class to the Doctrine of the Polish Majority. The centrist politicians from Piast seemed eager to adopt the Doctrine not so much because of the numbers commanded by the advocates of exclusive nationalism and anti-Semitism, which in all likelihood did not change all that much following the events of December 11, but because of their intensity, intransigence, and willingness to resort to violence. But while the fear of violence and anarchy can certainly help explain the capitulation of Piast and other centrist politicians to the “Polish Majority,” it by no means rendered this capitulation inevitable.

Indeed, in some ways this story is about agency as much as it is about contingency. As Maciej Rataj’s decision to embrace the Doctrine of the Polish Majority illustrates, Piast

deputies had a very clear alternative to an alliance with the National Democrats.

According to Rataj, a shrewd and intelligent political leader, most Poles would have opted for land reform even in alliance with the “Jews” (or the minorities to be more precise).

Yet, it was Piast *leadership* rather than the grassroots, which effectively made the decision to opt for anti-Semitism and rejected more radical calls for land reform. In the case of Rataj, this decision was certainly the result of pragmatic calculations rather than visceral fears.

To return to David Ost’s framework of the “politics of anger,” in the aftermath of Narutowicz’ murder, Piast had the *choice* to ally with the left, mobilize economic anger by providing an economic narrative of “what went wrong” and champion radical social change. Alternately, it had the option to ally with the right and join the latter in providing a narrative that emphasized the culpability of a whole people, the Jews, for Poland’s problems. The advantage of the second narrative was that it could help avoid rapid and potentially destabilizing social change. Rataj’s acceptance of the Doctrine of the Polish Majority in the aftermath of the December Events, illustrates in a particularly clear manner the thinking which seems to have motivated many other Piast deputies, as well as other leading centrist politicians, such as Premier Władysław Sikorski and President Stanisław Wojciechowski. All of them appeared to have made the choice to accept an alliance with political anti-Semitism rather than face the possibility of social instability. These were active and conscious decisions made by individual politicians, rather than the results of some inevitable social process. My goal as a historian is to present the context in which these decisions were made. Readers, of course, are free to judge them.

In the Piłsudski “Camp”, the situation was more complicated. To be sure, as long as Piłsudski was alive, his followers would never openly accept either the Doctrine of the Polish Majority or political anti-Semitism. Still, in Chapter X we saw a palpable if subtle change in the approach of leading politicians and publicists to the “Jewish Question” and, what follows, to the discourse of the nation. With some notable exceptions such as Tadeusz Hołówko, the Piłsudczyks, and the Polish left as a whole, found themselves unable to honestly analyze and articulate the causes of the president’s murder or to take an honest and forceful stand against the destructive effects anti-Semitism and exclusive nationalism in the public sphere.

The causes of this surprising timidity cannot be easily discerned. It is unlikely that people who could deploy the formidable POW organization or the feared PPS militia would cave in before National Democratic high school and university students. Certainly, the Piłsudczyks were sensitive to losing the “hearts and minds” of educated Polish youth which, as the riots following the election of Narutowicz demonstrated, was more attracted to anti-Semitism than most Poles. It is also likely, though difficult if not impossible to demonstrate conclusively, that they were awed by the collective effervescence evinced by the protesters.

But perhaps the deepest reason for the Piłsudczyks’ silent surrender to the Discourse of the Polish Majority was the one diagnosed by the mysterious A.N-A. in Chapter X: the internal contradictions of their political thought. As I have attempted to argue in Chapters IV and V, Piłsudczyk thought was more modern and sophisticated than

is generally acknowledged. But it was also more inherently contradictory and unstable. In particular, the “civicness” of Piłsudczyk nationalism was always somewhat dubious, with the primary criteria in their understanding of belonging to the national community being culture rather than citizenship. Further, the Piłsudczyks’ quasi-Nietzschean dedication to “greatness” was in constant tension with the commitment to “humanity” and universalism. In the late 1910s and early 1920s it appeared that these principles could be easily reconciled by the creation of a powerful Polish state capable of upholding the independence of its weaker neighbors. But those hopes were dashed by the outcome of the Polish-Soviet war and, even more so, by Stanisław Grabski’s handling of the peace negotiations at Riga. And since the “great” multiethnic Poland of their dreams never materialized and Jews, Ukrainians, and Belarusians were never *really* seen as Poles in the full sense of that word, the temptation to sacrifice the minorities in the service of some presumed greater good was always inherently embedded in Piłsudczyk political thinking. The contingent events surrounding the election and murder of Narutowicz created a situation in which such a bargain appeared ever more tempting. These considerations may help explain why the Piłsudczyks were willing to give up, or rather tone down, their defense of the civic conception of the Polish nation so quickly and so easily.

At any rate, having effectively abandoned the field to the National Democrats in December 1922, the Piłsudczyks seemed to have lost the ability to publicly challenge the discourse of the Polish Majority. Indeed, this would appear to be the most significant legacy of the Narutowicz murder: Even after they seized power in 1926, the Piłsudczyks proved unable to articulate a convincing counter-narrative of the nation and defend it in

the public arena. While their first moves in dealing with the “Nationalities Question” must be described as admirable, they were quickly abandoned. The dreaded “Nationality” and “Jewish” Questions continued to be a thorn in the side of successive Piłsudczyk governments.³ And while the National Democrats continued and intensified their relentless anti-Semitic barrage, it was clear to all that the Piłsudczyks lacked the heart to engage the discourse of the right in the same forceful manner as before the bloody events of December 1922. Once the discursive field had been surrendered once, it proved impossible to reclaim.

*

The rapprochement between the followers of Piłsudski and anti-Semitic nationalism, so eagerly anticipated by Adolf Nowaczyński in the *Endek Myśl Narodowa* and the mysterious A.N-A. in the Piłsudczyk *Droga*, could never take place as long as Piłsudski was alive. But following his death in 1935, the faction of General Rydz-Śmigły defeated Piłsudski’s anointed successor, Colonel Walery Sławek, and won power in the internal struggle within the Piłsudczyk movement. To bolster their flagging popularity, Rydz’s followers attempted, for the first time in the history of the Piłsudczyk movement, to create a mass-based party organization. The result of these attempts was the Camp of National Unity (*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego* or OZN), which embraced economic and political anti-Semitism in an explicit effort to reach out to a number of National Democratic splinter groups. The organization’s “Ideological-Political Declaration,” unveiled with much fanfare on February 20, 1937 by Colonel Adam Koc, who ironically

had once been among the most forceful advocates of dealing harshly with the spiritual authors of the Narutowicz murder, eschewed violent solutions to the “Jewish Question” but endorsed “Polish society’s understandable instinct of self-defense” against the Jews in the cultural and economic realms. OZN’s exclusion of Jews from its membership, despite its rhetoric of “national unity” and inclusiveness towards “all those willing to participate in the common effort,” aptly symbolized the new conception of the Polish nation embraced by Piłsudski’s heirs.⁴

But by that time, the memory of Narutowicz, and of what his election represented, had long ago become a liability for virtually everyone in Poland. The last words belong to Bernard Singer, a long time *Sejm* correspondent and one of the most insightful observers of Poland’s political scene:

[N]o one mentioned Narutowicz in the *Sejm* on the tenth anniversary of his death. There remained only a plaque built into a wall on the right side of the entrance to the *Sejm* next to the deputies’ coat check, with poorly visible gold letters. A number of years ago, a legend circulated among the janitorial staff that the *Sejm* was haunted. The janitors swore that during the government of the Hyena-Piast coalition, at night one could hear a howling the backrooms as well as the sound of slow, heavy footsteps walking from the offices of Piast towards those of the ZLN. But today even this legend has been forgotten, just as the circumstances of Narutowicz’s election and the causes of his death have been expunged from collective memory.⁵

¹ Ironically, the chief culprit of the crisis was Dmowski’s trusted protégé Kucharski.

² Kijeński, *Proces Eligjusza Niewiadomskiego*, 13. See Chapter IX.

³ Forceful attempts were made to curtail anti-Semitic violence. Following Piłsudski’s personal directives in this matter, between 1926 and 1931 the government granted Polish citizenship to some 700,000 Russian Jews, who had hitherto been stateless residents of Poland. Some efforts were also made in supporting Belarsians and Ukrainian schools. Paruch, *Od konsolidacji państwowej do konsolidacji narodowej*, 240–246.

⁴ *Deklaracja ideowo-polityczna Obozu Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, 2nd ed. (OZN, 1946), 18.

⁵ Singer, "Mordowanie po śmierci."

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