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Myth and Memory in Polish Politics: The Institute of National Remembrance  
(1989-2021)

by

Ethan Bassett

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submitted in partial fulfillment

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Dedicated to:

To my loving wife Courtney, my dedicated and patient thesis advisor Dr. Colin Johnson, Daniel for helping me stay sane, and all other family and friends and family who helped me on this adventure.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AINR - The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation

AIPN - Archives of the Institute of Remembrance

AWS – Solidarity Electoral Action

BBH - Historical Research Office

BEN - National Education Office

BEP - Public Education Office

BL - Vetting Office

BPiL - Office of Search and Identification

BStU - Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic

BUiAD – Office for Preservation and Dissemination of Archival Records

BUWiM - Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom

CEE – Central and Eastern Europe

GKŚZpNP - Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation

IPN – Institute of National Remembrance

PiS – Law and Justice

PO – Civic Platform

PRL - People’s Republic of Poland

PSL - Polish People’s Party

PZPR - Polish United Workers’ Party

SB - Ministry of Public Security

SdRP - Social Democratic of the Republic of Poland

SLD - Democratic Left Alliance

SRP - Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland

UP – Labor Union

ÚSTR - Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes

UW – Freedom Union



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## Myth and Memory in Polish Politics: The Institute of National Remembrance (1989-2021)

### Thesis Abstract—Idaho State University

This thesis examines the role of institutions in the process of mythmaking by examining the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) and its role in the politics of memory in Poland. Since the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) different state institutions have been created with the intent of addressing the Communist past. Like many similar institutions the IPN has proven to be susceptible to political influences. The IPN holds a uniquely powerful position in the Polish mythscape due to its added judicial function, its size, and its influence over Polish academia. Over time, parties such as Law and Justice (PiS) have increasingly used the IPN as a mythmaking institution, leading to mission creep as it focuses more on mythmaking activities. The additional lens of the politics of memory is used to highlight the role of institutions in mythmaking and their effects on identity and politics.

Key Words: Poland, Politics of Memory, Institute of National Remembrance, Institutional Myth, Mythmaking

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## Introduction

On March 4, 2022, Polish historian Karol Nawrocki delivered a statement to the public in which he highlighted images of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, especially those connected with the Soviet past, such as a tank flying a USSR flag. Drawing upon these Communist symbols and how they reflect Communist ideology, Nawrocki called upon all nations, “to erase from the public space all names and symbols referring to people, organizations, events or dates from the Communist era.”<sup>1</sup> While a call for the removal of Communist symbols from the public sphere by an official or historian may not seem unusual, what makes this statement surprising is that Nawrocki made this statement in his official capacity as the director of the Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN), a Polish state institution which is tasked with maintaining former Communist archives, prosecuting Nazi and Communist crimes, and studying and educating the Polish public about their Communist past.

Statements such as this one made by Nawrocki help illustrate how the past can be mobilized as a political tool. More importantly statements made by officials such as Nawrocki illustrate how a state institution such as the IPN can be used in the process of mythmaking within the state and abroad. It is the fight for control over the IPN and myth in Poland which is of interest to this thesis. This thesis will highlight the role of institutions and institutionalized myths in shaping myths and national identities, specifically through the examination of the IPN and its role in the Polish politics, and the Polish mythscape.

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<sup>1</sup> Karol Nawrocki, “Statement by the President of the Institute of National Remembrance on decommunisation of the public space,” Statement by the President of the Institute of National Remembrance on decommunisation of the public space, March 4, 2022, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/9335,Statement-by-the-President-of-the-Institute-of-National-Remembrance-on-decommuni.html>.

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It is important to understand how the politics of memory and the fight over myth is playing out in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. An understanding of how the politics of memory is taking place around institutions can help better understand politics as a whole within that state. The IPN provides a unique lens in which to view and understand the politics of memory taking place in Poland and can provide insight into Polish politics as a whole. After the Second World War and the collapse of Communism CEE, the study of the politics of memory has become increasingly important to the social sciences.<sup>2</sup> One reason for increased interest and importance in the politics of memory is that the collapse of Communism left an ideological vacuum into which states have needed to create a new national identity, which often accompanies the creation of a new state or regime.<sup>3</sup> A significant part of the process in creating these new identities in post-Communist CEE is deciding on how to, or not, to address the Communist past.

In part to attempt to address the Communist past, most CEE states have created memory institutions, with the IPN being one of the most prominent of these institutions.<sup>4</sup> Many of these

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<sup>2</sup> Peter J. Verovšek, "Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past: The Politics of Memory as a Research Paradigm," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 4, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 529–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1167094>; Marco Siddi, "The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War," *European Politics and Society* 18, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 465–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2016.1261435>.

<sup>3</sup> Д. С. Плотников, "ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ПОЛИТИКЕ ПАМЯТИ В ГОСУДАРСТВАХ – СОЮЗНИКАХ РОССИИ НА ПОСТСОВЕТСКОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ ПОСЛЕ 2014 ГОДА," *Вестник Пермского университета ПОЛИТОЛОГИЯ* 1 (2018): 92–107, <https://doi.org/10.17072/2218-1067-2018-1-92-107>; Richard J. Evans, "Redesigning the Past: History in Political Transitions," *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 1 (January 2003): 5–12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009403038001960>; Vincent Della Sala, "Political Myth, Mythology and the European Union\*: POLITICAL MYTH, MYTHOLOGY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2010): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2009.02039.x>; Uldricks, "War, Politics and Memory: Russian Historians Reevaluate the Origins of World War II," *History and Memory* 21, no. 2 (2009): 60, <https://doi.org/10.2979/his.2009.21.2.60>; Thomas Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230604216>; Patrycja Bałdys and Katarzyna Piątek, "Memory Politicized. Polish Media and Politics of Memory - Case Studies," *MEDIA I SPOŁECZEŃSTWO*, 2016, 64–77.

<sup>4</sup> Georges Mink, "Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010)," in *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Memory Games* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 155–70.

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memory institutions in post-Communist CEE were created with functions such as the maintenance of Communist state security archives, performing research, and educating citizens about the Communist past.<sup>5</sup> While the IPN shares these same mandates, it has differences which set it apart from other CEE memory institutions. These differences include a judicial function to prosecute communist and Nazi crimes, its size which is significantly larger than most other CEE memory institutions, its influence over Polish academia, and the near monopoly it has on the Polish mythscape. The story of the IPN and its increased influence and power provides a unique lens to understand the politics of memory, especially state institutions' role in mythmaking.

Understanding the IPN and its past, present, and future political power requires looking through more than just the lens of electoral politics. While outside electoral politics do influence what is happening at the IPN, as with other memory institutions,<sup>6</sup> a solely electoral story cannot fully explain the importance of the IPN in Polish politics. Electoral politics cannot explain why parties such as Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) have put so much effort into controlling institutions like the IPN, yet opposition parties such as Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO) have purposefully avoided using the IPN as a political tool. This is not to say that electoral politics are not important to the politics of memory and the story of the IPN, but a traditional electoral politics story alone cannot answer what current and future impact the IPN might have on Polish politics. It is only with the addition of the politics of memory, and the role of institutions in that framework, that the battle for the IPN and other similar institutions and their role and impact in and on politics can be fully understood.

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<sup>5</sup> Valentin Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ? Les Producteurs Du Récit Historique Officiel à l'Institut de La Mémoire Nationale\*," *Revue d'études Comparatives Est-Ouest* 42, no. 04 (December 2011): 5–35, <https://doi.org/10.4074/S0338059911004013>.

<sup>6</sup> Mink, "Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010)."

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Through the lense of the poltics of memeory this thesis demostrates the important role of institutions in mythmaking, specifically through looking at the IPN and how it can and has been used as a mythmaking institution in Poland. The first section of this consists of a literature review which defines the key concepts needed to understand institutional myths and mythmaking in the context of the poltics of memory. A solid or agreed upon framework and definitons for the poltics of memory does not exist witiin the literature, and this thesis does not delve into the debates over various terms and their specific definitions. Instead it looks to apply genereal concepts from the politics of memory to the case of the IPN and Polish politics in order to highlight and better understand institutional myths and mythmaking. The second section of the thesis consists of a historical background which is needed to understand the context of the creation, function, and fight over the IPN, and how it has been or can be used to influence and shape Polish politics. The next section uses the general framework of the poltics of memory to analyze the historical background of the IPN and its activities, to explain why and how different groups have (or have not) fought for control over it, and to demonstrate how IPN has been used as a poltical tool. The last section is the conclusion which discusses further areas of research that should be examined in order to illuminate and illustrate the role of isnittuions IPN in the context of the poltics of memory.

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## Literature Review

### *The Politics of Memory*

In order to understand the politics of memory, a definition of the politics of memory itself is needed. The literature surrounding the politics of memory uses a diverse set of terms across a range of different languages, in Polish it is often “*polityka historyczna*”<sup>7</sup>, the German term often used is “*Geschichtspolitik*”<sup>8</sup>, in Russian “Политика памяти”<sup>9</sup> and in English it is often “the politics of memory.”<sup>10</sup> The variety of terms and different languages used to describe the politics

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<sup>7</sup> Often translated as, “the politics of memory” or “the politics of history” Valentin Behr, “Historical Policy-Making in Post-1989 Poland: A Sociological Approach to the Narratives of Communism,” *European Politics and Society* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 81–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2016.1269447>; Tom Junes, “Whither Poland’s ‘Ministry of Historical Truth,’” *Balkan Insight* (blog), September 6, 2021, <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/09/06/whither-polands-ministry-of-historical-truth/>; Kornelia Kończal, “The Invention of the ‘Cursed Soldiers’ and Its Opponents: Post-War Partisan Struggle in Contemporary Poland,” *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 34, no. 1 (February 2020): 67–95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419865332>.

<sup>8</sup> Jörg Hackmann, “Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation: Politics of History as a Battlefield in Poland, 2015–18,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no. 4 (October 2, 2018): 587–606, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2018.1528742>; Katarzyna Kačka, “Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia, mechanizmy działania – przykład Polski,” in *Narracje pamięci: między polityką a historią*, ed. Katarzyna Kačka, Joanna Piechowiak-Lamparska, and Anna Ratke-Majewska (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2015), 59–80.

<sup>9</sup> Д. С. Плотников, “ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ПОЛИТИКЕ ПАМЯТИ В ГОСУДАРСТВАХ – СОЮЗНИКАХ РОССИИ НА ПОСТСОВЕТСКОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ ПОСЛЕ 2014 ГОДА”; Е.В. Беляев and А. А. Линченко, “ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ ПОЛИТИКА ПАМЯТИ И ЦЕННОСТИ МАССОВОГО ИСТОРИЧЕСКОГО СОЗНАНИЯ В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ РОССИИ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПРОТИВОРЕЧИЯ,” *Studia Humanitatis* 2 (2016): 1–14; Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ»,” *Вестник Московского университета*, 12, no. 3 (2018): 39–48.

<sup>10</sup> Florian Peters, “Remaking Polish National History: Reenactment over Reflection,” *Cultures of History Forum*, 2016, 10; David Clarke and Paweł Duber, “Polish Cultural Diplomacy and Historical Memory: The Case of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 33, no. 1 (March 2020): 49–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-018-9294-x>; Monica Ciobanu, “Criminalising the Past and Reconstructing Collective Memory: The Romanian Truth Commission,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 2 (March 2009): 313–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130802630870>; Junes, “Whither Poland’s ‘Ministry of Historical Truth’”; Alexander Georgievich Tsimbal, “Belarus in the Historical Politics of Poland (2005–2020),” *Journal of the Belarusian State University. History*, no. 4 (October 30, 2020): 20–33, <https://doi.org/10.33581/2520-6338-2020-4-20-33>; Evans, “Redesigning the Past”; Leszek Koczanowicz, “Memory of Politics and Politics of Memory. Reflections on the Construction of the Past in Post-Totalitarian Poland,” *Studies in East European Thought* 49, no. 4 (December 1997): 259–70, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1008617708743>; Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” in *Twenty Years After Communism*, ed. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik (Oxford University Press, 2014), 7–36, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199375134.003.0002>; Siddi, “The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War”; Verovšek, “Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past”; Maria Domańska, “№ 316 The Myth of the Great Patriotic War as a Tool of the Kremlin’s Great Power Policy.,” *Centre for Eastern Studies*, no. 316 (December 12, 2019): 1–10; Danielle Drozdowski, Sarah De Nardi, and Emma Waterton, “Geographies of Memory, Place and Identity: Intersections in Remembering War

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of memory makes it hard to create a single definition. However, a working definition can be made from some of the commonalities between these terms. The definition of the politics of memory for this thesis is that the politics of memory is the deliberate act of utilizing the past as a political tool through creating, modifying, and mobilizing collective identities.

## **History**

History unlike memory and myth is concerned purely with objective and empirical truths.<sup>11</sup> Historians will often oppose the notion that history should be used in the realm of politics.<sup>12</sup> While historians often attempt to stay independent and objective, history is subject to interpretation, bias, and manipulation. History is more susceptible than other forms of empirically based fields such as math and engineering because history is subject to the influences of individuals and institutions.<sup>13</sup> History is nuanced and complex, which makes it less digestible to the common public. Due to the malleability and complexity of history a single simplistic version of historical truth cannot and does not exist.<sup>14</sup> Instead, the past is “not a given fact but is subject to societal negotiations.”<sup>15</sup>

History, while intended to be objective and independent is often used for the politics of memory. While true objective history is nigh impossible, the distinction of the theoretical concept of history is important in understanding the politics of memory. Historical facts are often

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and Conflict: Geographies of Memory, Place and Identity,” *Geography Compass* 10, no. 11 (November 2016): 447–56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12296>.

<sup>11</sup> Bałdys and Piątek, “Memory Politicized. Polish Media and Politics of Memory - Case Studies”; Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*; Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ».”

<sup>12</sup> Kačka, “Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia, mechanizmy działania – przykład Polski.”

<sup>13</sup> Evans, “Redesigning the Past.”

<sup>14</sup> Verovšek, “Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past”; Duncan Bell, “Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory,” *Constellations* 15, no. 1 (March 2008): 148–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2008.00478.x>; Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” in *Twenty Years After Communism* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 7–36, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199375134.003.0002>.

<sup>15</sup> Ekaterina Kalinina and Manuel Menke, “Negotiating the Past in Hyperconnected Memory Cultures: Post-Soviet Nostalgia and National Identity in Russian Online Communities,” *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 60, [https://doi.org/10.1386/macp.12.1.59\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/macp.12.1.59_1).

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used as the foundation for myths.<sup>16</sup> Myths often contain historical truths<sup>17</sup>, but myths make use of a “dramatic form and subjective application of the facts.”<sup>18</sup> The concept of history is thus paradoxical in that it is supposed to be objective field, but historians and the environment they work in often make history subjective. The way to reconcile this paradox to place history within the framework of the politics of memory used in this thesis is to view history as the attempt to create an objective record of the past. The historical material created in this pursuit can then be used in the formation of myths and other historical narratives.<sup>19</sup> This means that a key role that the IPN plays in the politics of memory in Poland is to provide the historical materials needed for the formation of myths.

### ***Memory***

Memory is perhaps the least defined concept in the lexicon of the politics of memory. According to Duncan Bell memory, “...is an under-theorized and yet grossly over-employed term.”<sup>20</sup> Memory comes with an overabundance adjectives attached to it, such as “individual

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<sup>16</sup> Sandra Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going: From Past Myths to Present Politics,” *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 53, no. 1 (March 2019): 57–75, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-017-9410-x>.

<sup>17</sup> Della Sala, “Political Myth, Mythology and the European Union\*.”

<sup>18</sup> Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going.”

<sup>20</sup> Duncan Bell, “Mythscape: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (March 2003): 74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0007131032000045905>.



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memory,”<sup>21</sup> “collective memory,”<sup>22</sup> “communicative memory,”<sup>23</sup> “cultural memory,”<sup>24</sup> “political memory,”<sup>25</sup> and “institutional memory.”<sup>26</sup> While there are some important distinctions between some of these different types of memory, such as individual and collective memory, the distinctions between many of these terms is often minimal. It is not the intention of this thesis to define or understand the different variations of memory. Instead, only a general concept of memory is needed to understand the politics of memory and the case of the IPN. Thus, a broad definition of memory is sufficient and can be created through using general concepts of memory.

First, it is important to distinguish experience and memory from one another. An experience is an event that individuals go through, and memory is the recollection of that experience in the context of the present.<sup>27</sup> This distinction is important to understand the differences between memory and experience, and to delineate history from memory. The event itself that an individual experiences is an objective historical event, but the experience of the

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<sup>21</sup> Jan Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” in *Cultural Memories*, vol. 4, Knowledge and Space (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 15–27, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8945-8\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8945-8_2); Siddi, “The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War”; Drozdowski, De Nardi, and Waterton, “Geographies of Memory, Place and Identity”; Kalinina and Menke, “Negotiating the Past in Hyperconnected Memory Cultures”; Jeffrey K Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,” *Sociological Theory* 17, no. 3 (November 1999): 333–48; Richard Ned Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 1–39; Danielle Drozdowski, Emma Waterton, and Shanti Sumartojo, “Cultural Memory and Identity in the Context of War: Experiential, Place-Based and Political Concerns,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 101, no. 910 (April 2019): 251–72, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383119000110>.

<sup>22</sup> Bell, “Mythscape”; Bell, “Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory”; Kubik and Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” 2014; Siddi, “The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War”; Ann Rigney, “Remembrance as Remaking: Memories of the Nation Revisited: Remembrance as Remaking,” *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 2 (April 2018): 240–57, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12388>; Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe”; Peter Kabachnik, Alexi Gugushvili, and Ana Kirvalidze, “What about the Monument?: Public Opinion and Contentious Politics in Stalin’s Homeland,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 67, no. 3 (May 3, 2020): 264–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2018.1540276>; Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures”; Hackmann, “Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation”; Baldys and Piątek, “Memory Politicized. Polish Media and Politics of Memory - Case Studies”; Ciobanu, “Criminalising the Past and Reconstructing Collective Memory”; Shona Allison, “Residual History: Memory and Activism in Modern Poland,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 6 (November 2015): 906–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1053388>.

<sup>23</sup> Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory.”

<sup>24</sup> Assmann; Rigney, “Remembrance as Remaking.”

<sup>25</sup> Verovšek, “Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past.”

<sup>26</sup> Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe.”

<sup>27</sup> Bell, “Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory.”

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individual is subjective, and is what is used in the construction of memory.<sup>28</sup> Memory is influenced by its interaction with the present which means that memory is fluid and malleable.<sup>29</sup> This makes memory susceptible to both internal and external influences.<sup>30</sup>

Memory serves a plethora of functions. Memory is a vital part of both individual and collective identity.<sup>31</sup> Memory serves as a mediation between the past and the present.<sup>32</sup> Memory also serves as, “a sense of temporal anchoring...” in a world that is in a constant state of change.<sup>33</sup> Memory serves as a way for individuals and communities to understand their place in society.<sup>34</sup> Memory also serves as a way for people to justify their choices to themselves to shape their personal narrative in which they are the actor.<sup>35</sup> Due to its malleability and how it shapes individual and collective identity, memory is an important part of the politics of memory.

While many of the distinctions between different types of memory are often minimal, one important thing to distinguish from one another are individual and collective memory. Individual memory is a personal or autobiographical understanding of an experience from the past in the context of the present.<sup>36</sup> Unlike other types of memory such as collective memory, individual memory cannot be passed from one individual to another.<sup>37</sup> Individual memory is shaped by the

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<sup>28</sup> Lisa A Kirschenbaum demonstrates this concept through the Siege of Leningrad. The siege of the city itself is a historical fact. The experiences of individuals during the siege, and the policies of the USSR as part of the politics of memory have shaped the memory and myth of the siege. Lisa A Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Bell, “Mythscape”; Peter Ricketson, “Political Myth the Political Uses of History, Tradition and Memory” (Book, University of Wollongong, 2001), <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/1438/>; Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Représentations* 26 (1989): 7–24.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Ricketson, “Political Myth the Political Uses of History, Tradition and Memory.”

<sup>31</sup> Drozdowski, De Nardi, and Waterton, “Geographies of Memory, Place and Identity”; Baldys and Piątek, “Memory Politicized. Polish Media and Politics of Memory - Case Studies.”

<sup>32</sup> Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe”; Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.”

<sup>33</sup> Peter Ricketson, “Political Myth the Political Uses of History, Tradition and Memory,” 179.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 1–39.

<sup>35</sup> Lebow.

<sup>36</sup> Bell, “Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory.”

<sup>37</sup> Bell, “Mythscape”; Bell, “Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory.”

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unique experiences and perspectives of an individual. In the attempt of sharing an individual memory, the memory is reshaped by the experiences and perspectives of the individual who it is being shared with. Due to individual memory not being able to be passed to others, individual memory dies with that individual, this is often called living memory.<sup>38</sup>

While individual memory helps shape an individual's identity and purpose, memory as a tool in the politics of memory is often collective. While individual memory is the sole property of an individual, the act of remembering is ultimately a social process.<sup>39</sup> Remembrance is the act of remembering in the context of the present which weaves together the past with the present.<sup>40</sup> Individual memory does have the ability to shape collective memory, and collective memory also has the ability to shape individual memory, as the two are reconciled with one another.<sup>41</sup> Each individual that joins a collective brings with them their own individual memories which can shape a collective memory in some small way, and in turn an individual's memory is shaped by the memory of the collective through the act of remembering and forgetting.<sup>42</sup>

Collective memory is a memory that is shared by individuals in a collective or community.<sup>43</sup> This collective memory is shaped and reconciled through acts of remembrance. Like individual memory, collective memory is a remembering of the past shaped by the present.<sup>44</sup> For collective memories to be created or modified, there must be a process of selective

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<sup>38</sup> Andrei Linchenko and Oksana Golovashina, "'With Tears upon Our Eyes?': Commemorations of Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War in the School Practice in the Soviet Union and Russia," *JSSE - Journal of Social Science Education* 18, no. 1 (Fall 2019): 56–80, <https://doi.org/10.4119/JSSE-912>.

<sup>39</sup> Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226774497.001.0001>; Lebow, "The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe."

<sup>40</sup> Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking."

<sup>41</sup> Peter Ricketson, "Political Myth the Political Uses of History, Tradition and Memory."

<sup>42</sup> Kubik and Bernhard, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," 2014; Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking."

<sup>43</sup> Siddi states that collective memory, "refers to the shared memories held by a community about the past..." Siddi, "The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War," 466; Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking."

<sup>44</sup> Siddi, "The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War."

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remembering and forgetting to reconcile aspects of individual memory with that of the collective.<sup>45</sup> The need for selective remembering and forgetting increases with the size of the group, especially at a national level where a broad number of groups with vastly different experiences have to be reconciled with one another.<sup>46</sup> As individual memories or smaller collective memories are reconciled with broader ones, they can be subsumed by the larger collective memory.<sup>47</sup>

### *Myth*

Myth like memory has become broadly used in the literature of the politics, and like memory it has not been clearly defined. As stated by Sergei Belov (Сергей Белов), there is yet to be any sort of agreement on what constitutes the nature or sources of myths.<sup>48</sup> As with memory myths come with a wide variety of adjectives such as “political myths”,<sup>49</sup> “historical myths”,<sup>50</sup> “foundational myths”,<sup>51</sup> and conspiracy myths.<sup>52</sup> Also as with memory, while some of

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<sup>45</sup> Rigney, “Remembrance as Remaking”; Kubik and Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Rigney, “Remembrance as Remaking”; Kubik and Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” 2014.

<sup>47</sup> As stated by Fogu and Wulf collective memory works by, “subsuming individual experiences under cultural schemes that make them comprehensible and therefore meaningful. (2006) Pg 292; This can also be illustrated by Kirschenbaum, who points out that many of the survivors of the Siege of Leningrad were able to forget or marginalize their memories of corruption and incompetency of the Soviet State, and instead focus on the heroic struggle of the city against the Nazi fascists. (2006)

<sup>48</sup> Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ».”

<sup>49</sup> In Russian *Политический миф* Ольга Олеговна Волчкова, “Миф как форма воспроизводства и отражения политического бытия,” *Общество: философия, история, культура* 3, no. 59 (2019); Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ»”; Michael Kranert, “Political Myth as a Legitimation Strategy: The Case of the Golden Age Myth in the Discourses of the Third Way,” *Journal of Language and Politics* 17, no. 6 (2018): 882–906, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17059.kra>; Della Sala, “Political Myth, Mythology and the European Union\*”; Bo Petersson, “Putin and the Russian Mythscape: Dilemmas of Charismatic Legitimacy,” *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 235–54; Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*.

<sup>50</sup> Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ»”; Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going.”

<sup>51</sup> Siddi, “The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War”; Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going.”

<sup>52</sup> Ilya Yablokov, *Fortress Russia: Conspiracy Theories in Post-Soviet Russia*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA: Polity, 2018).

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the subdivisions between types of myth can be helpful in some circumstances, for the purpose of this thesis only a base definition of myth is needed.

While there are various definitions and types of myths, one unifying aspect of myths is that they are a simplified narrative of the past.<sup>53</sup> History by itself is too nuanced and complex to be turned into a simple and broadly digestible narrative.<sup>54</sup> It is myths that provide a simplified narrative of the past. Another commonality is that myths use aspects of the past to interpret and legitimize the present.<sup>55</sup> While there is not a consensus on how much historical backing a myth needs, there is a general consensus that myths use at least some aspects of history as a foundation.<sup>56</sup> Selected historical facts can provide a foundation for myths, but rather than defining a myth, the facts of the past are merely used to legitimize myth. Another commonality of myths is that they are often emotionally centered.<sup>57</sup> Since myths only selectively use facts and are emotionally centered, they cannot be “proven wrong.” The facts underpinning a myth can be proven to be false, but myths themselves are usually impervious to such efforts.

Myths serve the important function of giving individuals and communities identity and purpose.<sup>58</sup> As stated by Obradović myths, “bind the past with the present and the future of a

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<sup>53</sup> Bell, “Mythscape”; Della Sala, “Political Myth, Mythology and the European Union”; Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ»”; George Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths,” in *Myths and Nationhood* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 34–53.

<sup>54</sup> Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ».”

<sup>55</sup> Сергей Игоревич Белов; Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going”; Peter Ricketson, “Political Myth the Political Uses of History, Tradition and Memory”; Siddi, “The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War”; Verovšek, “Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past.”

<sup>56</sup> Siddi (2017), Wolfe (2006), and Sala (2010) all argue that myths need at least some historical or factual backing is needed for myths

<sup>57</sup> Koczanowicz, “Memory of Politics and Politics of Memory. Reflections on the Construction of the Past in Post-Totalitarian Poland”; Rigney, “Remembrance as Remaking”; Kranert, “Political Myth as a Legitimation Strategy”; Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths.”

<sup>58</sup> Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ»”; Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going”; Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths.”

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nation and its people by defining the origins of the group... [and] its role in relation to other nations.”<sup>59</sup> Myths are framed in such a way as to define who is part of the group, and who is not.<sup>60</sup> The simplified narrative of a myth and its function as a provider of identity and purpose help to create a mental heuristic or model to which those who subscribe to it can view the events of the past, present, and future. While memory and collective memory also provide communities with identities, myths are what give purpose to these identities.

Myths on their own are just a story until they are interacted with in the context of the present.<sup>61</sup> As phrased by Koczanowicz myths need, “confrontation with social reality.”<sup>62</sup> Like memory, myths are engaged with in the present through the acts of remembrance and commemoration. As myths are interacted with in the context of the present, they have to adapt to the present, because myths need to resonate with memory. If a myth is able to resonate with a collective it can become a part of or subsume that collective’s identity.<sup>63</sup> If a myth does not resonate within a collective, a new myth might be able to take its place. The space in which myths are formed, transmitted, and compete with one another is the mythscape.<sup>64</sup>

The main political utility of myths as a tool in the politics of memory is that they can provide legitimacy for a regime and its policies and unite or mobilize a populace. Myths serve to provide or bolster the legitimacy of a state, regime, or institution.<sup>65</sup> This is one reason new myths

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<sup>59</sup> Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going,” 58.

<sup>60</sup> Bell, “Mythscape”; Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ»”; Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths.”

<sup>61</sup> Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going.”

<sup>62</sup> Leszek Koczanowicz, “IN THE NAME OF THE NATION . . . IN THE NAME OF THE MARKET. WHAT WAS OUR REVOLUTION FOR?,” *In the Name of the Nation*, Value Inquiry Book Series, 167 (2005): 11.

<sup>63</sup> Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths”; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments*; Rigney, “Remembrance as Remaking.”

<sup>64</sup> Bell, “Mythscape”; Bell, “Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory.”

<sup>65</sup> Сергей Игоревич Белов, “СООТНОШЕНИЕ КОНЦЕПТОВ «ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ» И «ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ МИФ»”; Obradović, “Who Are We and Where Are We Going”; Peter Ricketson, “Political Myth the Political Uses of History, Tradition and Memory”; Kubik and Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” 2014; Д. С. Плотноков, “ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ПОЛИТИКЕ ПАМЯТИ В ГОСУДАРСТВАХ – СОЮЗНИКАХ РОССИИ НА ПОСТСОВЕТСКОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ ПОСЛЕ 2014 ГОДА”; Domańska, “№

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accompany the creation of a new state, regime, or social instability.<sup>66</sup> Myths can also serve to delegitimize a regime.<sup>67</sup> and to legitimize policy.<sup>68</sup> With the collapse of the USSR, many of the former Soviet States and Eastern Bloc countries such as Poland had to establish new legitimizing myths with the death of Marxism as their primary state myth.<sup>69</sup> Being so connected with identity, emotion, and political involvement, myths can be an effective political tool.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Institutions***

One of the biggest actors on the mythscape institutions.<sup>71</sup> As previously established, both myth and memory need interaction with the present to form or remain relevant. This interaction often comes in the form of acts of remembrance or commemoration. Institutions often play a pivotal role as they are often the ones to initiate or facilitate different forms of remembrance. State institutions are especially powerful, as they are often backed with the authority, power, and resources of the state. Once a group is able to institutionalize their desired myth, it gains an incumbency advantage which competing myths have to overcome.<sup>72</sup> Institutional control or

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316 The Myth of the Great Patriotic War as a Tool of the Kremlin's Great Power Policy.”; Kranert, “Political Myth as a Legitimation Strategy”; Della Sala, “Political Myth, Mythology and the European Union\*”; Petersson, “Putin and the Russian Mythscape: Dilemmas of Charismatic Legitimacy”; Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*; Evans, “Redesigning the Past”; Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths.”

<sup>66</sup> Д. С. Плотников, “ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ПОЛИТИКЕ ПАМЯТИ В ГОСУДАРСТВАХ – СОЮЗНИКАХ РОССИИ НА ПОСТСОВЕТСКОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ ПОСЛЕ 2014 ГОДА”; Evans, “Redesigning the Past”; Della Sala, “Political Myth, Mythology and the European Union\*”; Uldricks, “War, Politics and Memory”; Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*.

<sup>67</sup> Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*.

<sup>68</sup> Д. С. Плотников, “ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ПОЛИТИКЕ ПАМЯТИ В ГОСУДАРСТВАХ – СОЮЗНИКАХ РОССИИ НА ПОСТСОВЕТСКОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ ПОСЛЕ 2014 ГОДА”; Evans, “Redesigning the Past”; Domańska, “№ 316 The Myth of the Great Patriotic War as a Tool of the Kremlin's Great Power Policy.”

<sup>69</sup> Uldricks, “War, Politics and Memory”; Siddi, “The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War.”

<sup>70</sup> Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths.”

<sup>71</sup> Беляев and Линченко, “ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ ПОЛИТИКА ПАМЯТИ И ЦЕННОСТИ МАССОВОГО ИСТОРИЧЕСКОГО СОЗНАНИЯ В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ РОССИИ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПРОТИВОРЕЧИЯ.”

<sup>72</sup> Schudson claims that once myths are institutionalized they begin to gain their own momentum, staying salient in society and, “accumulates a self-perpetuating rhetorical power.” Michael Schudson, “The Past in the Present versus the Present in the Past,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, 2011, 288.

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capture can provide a myth the support of the language of the state, media, education,<sup>73</sup> and forms of remembrance or commemoration such as holidays and enjoy an initial trust and authority in the eyes of at least some of the people.<sup>74</sup>

Another reason institutions are such powerful actors on the mythscape is that the only way to secure a myth or collective memories from generational drift is by institutionalizing it.<sup>75</sup> Generational drift is the slow changing of memory and myth which occurs over time. Generational drift occurs over time because living memory cannot be passed on, and while collective memory and myths can be passed on, they both can fade and suffer from generational drift.<sup>76</sup> State institutions can also embed aspects of myth into other areas such as education or official state holidays.

Mythmaking is the process in which myths are created, modified, and promoted on the mythscape. State institutions like other actors in the mythscape can engage in mythmaking. This being said, certain institutions can facilitate mythmaking better than others. For example, in the United States, the Internal Revenue Service is a state institution, but it has almost no power as a mythmaking institution. On the other hand, the Department of Education has more potential power as a mythmaking institution as it has some influence over what educational material is used within the United States.

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<sup>73</sup> Bell states that, "Myths are formed and fostered in a variety of ways, but among the most significant vectors of transmission are the curricula of state educational institutions, schools in particular." Bell, "Mythscape," 161.

<sup>74</sup> Schudson, "The Past in the Present versus the Present in the Past."

<sup>75</sup> Verovšek, "Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past"; Schudson, "The Past in the Present versus the Present in the Past."

<sup>76</sup> Verovšek, "Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past"; Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments*; Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," in *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 300–303; Schudson, "The Past in the Present versus the Present in the Past."



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A type of a rising institutional actor in the post-Communist world which have significant potential as mythmaking institutions are national memory institutions.<sup>77</sup> According to Georges Mink both memory institutions and truth and reconciliation commissions gain their legitimacy, “on the grounds that they are on a quest for truth, with the understanding that truth is the prerequisite for reconciliation.”<sup>78</sup> It then follows that if these institutions seem to veer from that quest for truth to one of mythmaking, that they could potentially lose that legitimacy.

As stated previously, historians can be averse to using history and its search for factual truth as a political tool, and when it is, they will sometimes push back.<sup>79</sup> With both the aversion of historians toward mythmaking, and the legitimacy of these institutions being pinned on a perception as a truth-finding institutions, there is potential risk in using such an institution for mythmaking. However, these memory institutions are susceptible to outside political influences,<sup>80</sup> and with myths having such great political potential, it is unsurprising that some of these institutions have adopted more of a mythmaking role. One such institution is the IPN located in Poland.

### ***Memory Regimes, Mnemonic Warriors, and Mnemonic Abnegators***

One framework surrounding the politics of memory which is especially useful in understanding the fight for control over institutions in the mythscape is that of memory regimes and mnemonic actors laid out by Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard.<sup>81</sup> Of particular interest to Kubik and Bernhard are “*official memory regimes*” which are, “...memory regimes whose

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<sup>77</sup> George Soroka and Félix Krawatzek, “Nationalism, Democracy, and Memory Laws,” *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 2 (2019): 157–71, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2019.0032>; Mink refers to them as a “‘National Memory Institute’ (NMI).” Mink, “Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010),” 156.

<sup>78</sup> Mink, “Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010),” 157.

<sup>79</sup> Clarke and Duber, “Polish Cultural Diplomacy and Historical Memory.”

<sup>80</sup> Mink, “Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010).”

<sup>81</sup> Kubik and Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” 2014.

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formulation and propagation involve the intensive participation of state institutions and/or political society...”<sup>82</sup> It is the involvement of state institutions, such as the IPN, whose involvement and participation over control of memory regimes that is the focus of this thesis. Poland has a “fractured memory regime” where there is not a single unified myth or collective narrative.<sup>83</sup>

In the case of Poland and the IPN two types of mnemonic actors have been operating, “mnemonic warriors” and “mnemonic abnegators.” Mnemonic warriors view the past as “non-negotiable” with “only one ‘true’ vision of the past...”<sup>84</sup> In the recent past this group has been led by the PiS who view Poland’s past as a tale of heroes and victims and have consistently tried to use the IPN as a mythmaking institution to promote that narrative. The other type of relevant mnemonic actors are “mnemonic abnegators” who do not see any sort of political advantage of using the past as a political tool, especially if the said group could negatively be affected by using the past as a political tool.<sup>85</sup> This group has been led by parties such as the Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*, SLD) and PO, who due to past ties with the Communist regime have much more to lose by using Poland’s Communist past as a political tool. It is unsurprising then that while these groups have had control of the IPN, they have chosen to do nothing with it.

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<sup>82</sup> Kubik and Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” 2014, 12,18.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, “The Politics and Culture of Memory Regimes,” in *Twenty Years After Communism* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 263, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199375134.003.0013>.

<sup>84</sup> Kubik and Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” 2014, 17.

<sup>85</sup> Kubik and Bernhard, 17.

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## ***Conclusion***

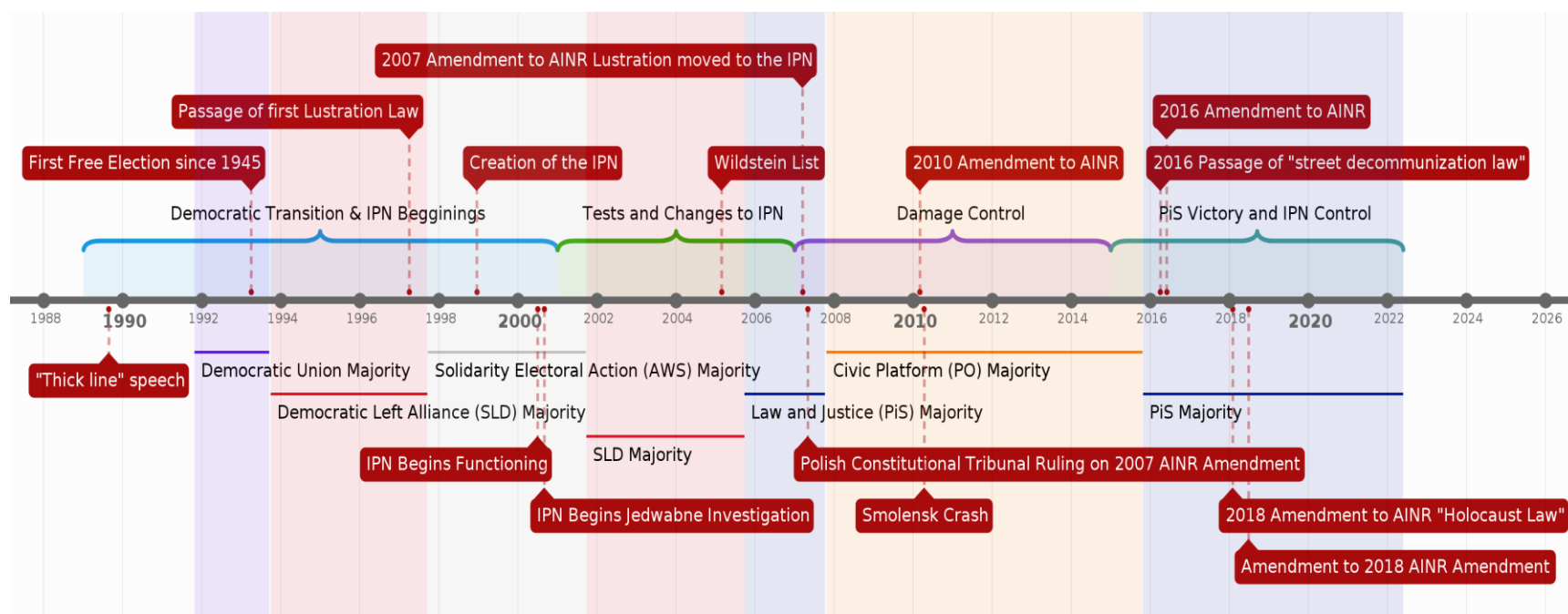
This thesis is not meant to settle any of the the disagreement or confusion of exact definitions and terms used within the politics of memory. The focus of this thesis is to examine the importance and role of the IPN as an institution within the framework of the politics of memory in order to better understand how institutions such as the IPN play a vital role in shaping memories and establishing a dominant myth. In large part because of its power and importance the IPN has been both the target and a weapon for those seeking to establish a dominant myth or memory regime in Poland. The IPN has increasingly become a mythmaking institution as mnemonic warriors such as PiS have and continue to use it to establish their dominant myth. The myth the mnemonic warriors seek to establish is that of heroes and victims, which highlights the struggle and sacrifice of Poles to maintain Polish independence and the democratic ideals of the West. The IPN provides the best avenue in the Polish mythscape for institutionalizing the myth of heroes and victims, which could have the potential to shape Poles' collective identity and ensure the myth's use as a political tool for many years to come.

## **Historical Background on Poland and the IPN (1989-2021)**

### ***Democratic Transition and the Beginning of the IPN (1989-2000)***

The beginning of the IPN like other memory institutions in their respective states starts with the fall of Communism in Poland. Much in part to the success of the Solidarity (*Solidarność*) movement the Communist Party in Poland, the Polish United Workers Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR), abandoned its monopoly on power, allowing for the June 1989 election of non-PZPR candidates for the first time since the Communists took power. The Polish Constitution was amended in late 1989, the PZPR was dissolved in early

Figure 1 Timeline of the IPN



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1990, and in 1991 the first fully democratic elections were held. Communist rule in the People's Republic of Poland (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL) had finally ended.

Like other countries after the collapse of the USSR and Communism in Eastern Europe, a large part of the Polish transition away from Communism toward a more democratic government and society was determining how to deal with its Communist past. In his inaugural address to the Sejm, the lower house of the Polish parliament, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first non-PZPR prime minister, proposed a way forward. He called for a “thick line” to be drawn between the Communist past and the present.<sup>86</sup> In large part this policy was adopted. This “thick line” speech would come to serve as a metaphor for the lenient approach of the Mazowiecki government and future administrations toward those who had been part of the Communist regime<sup>87</sup>.

The slow and democratic transition out of Communism for Poland meant that there was a call for unity more than punishment.<sup>88</sup> There were other pressures and priorities such as economic liberalization and the creation of a completely a new government. The presence of former Communist officials and politicians continued presence in Polish politics further complicated the issue with dealing with its Communist past. Initially, dealing with the Communist past was pushed to the margins.<sup>89</sup> However, the call for unity and creating a “thick line” did not last long as the Communist past was about to become a topic of political discussion, especially among former dissidents and the Polish political right.

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<sup>86</sup> In Polish “*gruba kreska*” Idesbald Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions: The First Fifteen Years of the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland (2001–2016),” in *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945*, ed. Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 255–69, [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-95306-6\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-95306-6_13).

<sup>87</sup> Aleks Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” in *Post-Communist Transitional Justice: Lessons from Twenty-Five Years of Experience*, ed. Lavinia Stan and Nadya Nedelsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 51–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107588516.006>.

<sup>88</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>89</sup> Goddeeris; Dariusz Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?,” in *The Convolutions of Historical Politics* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 45–58.

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The first fruits of an anti-Communist push was what became known as the “Macierewicz list.” In May of 1992 the Sejm passed a resolution which required Interior Minister Antoni Macierewicz to disclose a list of high-ranking officials who had cooperated or collaborated with Ministry of Public Security (*Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*, SB), the former security branch of the PRL.<sup>90</sup> Eventually a few lists of 66 officials who were allegedly connected to the SB, including the president and former leader of Solidarity Lech Walesa, were presented to the Polish parliament.<sup>91</sup> The lists had been quickly and poorly put together.<sup>92</sup> Despite its inaccuracies, the lists were leaked to the media and the public shortly thereafter.<sup>93</sup>

There was serious backlash from the Macierewicz list. The list contributed to a successful vote of no confidence in the Olszewski government which was dissolved and replaced in June of 1992.<sup>94</sup> Olszewski implied that his administration had fallen victim to a conspiracy linked the Communist government.<sup>95</sup> The Macierewicz list was seen in a negative light as an attempt to use the Communist past and archival documents as a political tool, and tainted and delayed the lustration process.<sup>96</sup> It also created opposition or hesitation among elites who were on the center and left on the Polish political spectrum in dealing with the Communist past or the opening of the SB archives.<sup>97</sup> From 1993 to 1997 the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (*Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, SdRP) and then its successor party the politically

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<sup>90</sup> Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” 2015.

<sup>91</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>92</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”

<sup>93</sup> Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” 2015.

<sup>94</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”; Georges Mink, “Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism? National Memory Agencies in Post-Communist Countries: The Polish Case (1998–2014), with References to East Germany,” *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 6 (November 2017): 1013–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1360853>.

<sup>95</sup> Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” 2015.

<sup>96</sup> Szczerbiak; Mink, “Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?”; Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”

<sup>97</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”

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center-left SLD, the successor parties to the PZPR, won elections. In part because of the Macierewicz list incident those on the left side of the political spectrum, such as SdRP, were much more hesitant to initiate debates over the Communist past due to the damage it might do to them.

The left, especially the successors of the Communist Party, had much more to lose than gain in dredging up the Communist past, while the center and right sometimes benefited from such efforts. For example, in April of 1995, outgoing President Lech Walesa and Interior Minister Andrzej Milczanowski accused the SLD Prime Minister Józef Oleksy of being an agent of the KGB. Despite Oleksy's declarations of innocence and eventual dismissal of the charges against him, the damage had been done. In April of 1996, Oleksy was forced to step down as prime minister.<sup>98</sup> What became known as the "Oleksy Affair" brought the Communist past, and how it should be dealt with into the forefront of the public and the Polish parliament.<sup>99</sup>

The Oleksy Affair led to the first legislative action in prosecuting former collaborators with the SB in April of 1997.<sup>100</sup> The law was sponsored by a coalition of three parties, the centric Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, PSL), the liberal Freedom Union (*Unia Wolności*, UW), and the social democratic Labour Union (*Unia Pracy*, UP).<sup>101</sup> Among other things this law required all high-ranking elected government officials to make a statement of declaration of whether they cooperated with the SB from 1944-1990 to a special prosecutor which would check the SB archives to verify their statements.<sup>102</sup> The law was adopted right before the 1997 parliamentary elections, but the law didn't come into effect until 1999 due to

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<sup>98</sup> Szczerbiak, "Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case," 2015.

<sup>99</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>100</sup> Stola, "Poland's Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?"; Szczerbiak, "Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case," 2015.

<sup>101</sup> Szczerbiak, "Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case," 2015.

<sup>102</sup> Szczerbiak.

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problems finding judges to conduct the lustration hearings.<sup>103</sup> In the 1997 parliamentary elections SLD was defeated by a coalition of UW and the conservative Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*, AWS). It was an AWS-coalition parliament that was able to find the judges needed, amending the Lustration law in June 1998 to make the Warsaw District Appeal Court as the lustration court.<sup>104</sup>

Another major change that the AWS led coalition was the creation of the Institution of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej – IPN). The bill that created the IPN “The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation” (AINR) was supported by the political right and center, while the political left was against the passage of the law.<sup>105</sup> President Kwaśniewski vetoed the legislation, however, the coalition of those who supported the creation of the IPN was able to be broad enough to override the veto.<sup>106</sup> The creation of the IPN was the culmination of over a decade’s struggle to control and deal with Poland’s Communist past. and marked the creation of the first major public institution created to study and deal with the Communist past in Poland.

The IPN was originally created to prosecute Nazi and Communist crimes, manage the SB archives, to perform research, and educate the public.<sup>107</sup> To execute these objectives, the IPN was created with three separate offices. The judicial function was filled through the Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation (*Główna Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu*, GKŚZpNP), absorbing the organization which had been tasked in 1945 to investigate solely Nazi crimes, the Chief Commission for the Prosecution

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<sup>103</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>104</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>105</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”

<sup>106</sup> Stola; Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>107</sup> Mink, “Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?”; Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”



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of Crimes against the Polish Nation (*Główna Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu*). The original Commission had been created for solely the purpose of investigating Nazi crimes, but across CEE a shift was taking place in which Communist crimes were being equated to those committed by the Nazis.<sup>108</sup> The IPN was given an expanded mission to investigate and prosecute Communist crimes as well. The archival task was given to the Office for Preservation and Dissemination of Archival Records (*Biuro Udostępniania i Archiwizacji Dokumentów*, BUiAD) while the goal of research and education was given to the Public Education Office (*Biuro Edukacji Publicznej*, BEP).

While it was officially created in 1998, it was not until 2000 that the IPN started to properly function due to administrative and procedural problems. One of the difficulties was selecting the first director of the IPN. There were fears that the political left would attempt to dismantle the IPN as it was the most adverse to dealing with the Communist past and lustration.<sup>109</sup> It would later mostly be the political right who would harness the IPN for its political purposes. The IPN was created with the power and status of a governmental institution, but in an attempt to shield the IPN from political interference it was created in such a way as was thought would be independent from normal political struggles.<sup>110</sup> One of the main shields against the IPN entering political struggles was the appointment process and the position of the director of the IPN.<sup>111</sup> The director was selected through a complex process which included a need for a

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<sup>108</sup> Maria Mälksoo, "Militant Democracy in International Relations: Mnemonical Status Anxiety and Memory Laws in Eastern Europe," *Review of International Studies* 47, no. 4 (October 2021): 489–507, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210521000140>; Soroka and Krawatzek, "Nationalism, Democracy, and Memory Laws"; Eva-Clarita Pettai, "Negotiating History for Reconciliation: A Comparative Evaluation of the Baltic Presidential Commissions," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 7 (August 9, 2015): 1079–1101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2015.1064862>.

<sup>109</sup> Stola, "Poland's Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?"

<sup>110</sup> Stola.

<sup>111</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"; Stola, "Poland's Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?"

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60 percent majority in the Sejm.<sup>112</sup> The director was also given a five-year term in which it is nigh impossible for them to be removed.<sup>113</sup> The IPN was also created with a council, collegium, or board, heretofore referred to as the council, but this council initially served only an advisory role to the IPN director.<sup>114</sup> The first person to be appointed as IPN director was Leon Kieres, who was sworn in as director on 30 June, 2000. Kieres was chosen because he was seen as a moderate who was not part of set political group of thought, satisfying all political parties involved.<sup>115</sup>

### ***Tests and Changes to the IPN (2000-2007)***

The first real test of the IPN happened in January of 2000 with the publication of *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* by Polish-American sociologist and historian Jan Gross.<sup>116</sup> The book detailed the Jedwabne pogrom, where on the 10 July 1941, 340 Jews, including women and children, were rounded up and killed by their Polish neighbors, possibly inspired by the Germans, in the Nazi-occupied Poland in the town of Jedwabne. The importance of the book was less the facts of the pogrom itself, which had been addressed before, but more on how it challenged the dominant narrative of Poland being “victims and heroes”, not perpetrators.<sup>117</sup>

The IPN was tasked with investigating Jedwabne which would come to be, “a catalyst for the genesis of the IPN.”<sup>118</sup> The importance of the investigation of the Jedwabne pogrom was that it solidified the perception of the IPN as an objective institution in the historical academic world

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<sup>112</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”

<sup>113</sup> Stola.

<sup>114</sup> Stola.

<sup>115</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”; Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>116</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>117</sup> Goddeeris, 258; Hackmann, “Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation.”

<sup>118</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions,” 258.

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and placed the IPN in the consciousness and trust of a large part of the Polish public.<sup>119</sup>

However, both Gross and the IPN were met with opposition and criticism for their work relating to Jedwabne. Kieres came under fire after apologizing in a statement to American Jewry while in the United States, which seemed to be an official acknowledgment of the incident by the Polish government.<sup>120</sup> Polish culpability in Jedwabne was counter to the previous narrative of Poland in WWII, and hard for many Poles to accept. Counter-narratives were produced to reinforce the prevailing narrative of Polish heroics and victimhood.<sup>121</sup> These narratives varied from no Polish involvement in the pogrom to Jedwabne being more of an isolated incident than attributable to antisemitism in Poland.<sup>122</sup>

What objectivity the IPN had gained in consciousness of Poles and academic circles with the Jedwabne investigation was significantly damaged shortly thereafter. In December of 2004, the former spokeswoman of former Prime Minister Mazowiecki was accused of having worked for the SB.<sup>123</sup> As part of the reaction to this accusation IPN president Kieres allowed a journalist to look at the file in the archives.<sup>124</sup> The fact that Kieres would allow access to the file to a journalist came as a shock to many.<sup>125</sup> Up until this point access to archival documents were strictly controlled and limited to only a few select groups of people.<sup>126</sup> As stated by Goddeeris in allowing access to journalists Kieres had, “both created a precedent and opened Pandora’s box.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions”; Peters, “Remaking Polish National History: Reenactment over Reflection.”

<sup>120</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>121</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>122</sup> Hackmann, “Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation.”

<sup>123</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>124</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>125</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>126</sup> Goddeeris; Mink, “Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?”

<sup>127</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions,” 206.

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Soon after the IPN's suffered a major blow to its image as a purely academic institution. On January 2005, a list of over 160,000 names of people who had files in the SB archives was released on the internet.<sup>128</sup> Journalist Bronisław Wildstein admitted to having copied the documents from the IPN archives but denied that he was the one who leaked the list onto the internet.<sup>129</sup> Wildstein was alleged to have been upset at the slow pace of IPN, the limitations on who could access the SB archives, and the IPN's failure in identifying former SB agents which it had promised to do.<sup>130</sup> The release of the list caused a significant amount of turbulence. There was confusion about the list itself, which did not distinguish who on the list had worked for or collaborated with the SB, those who were considered for recruitment by the SB, or those who were victims of the SB.<sup>131</sup> The release of the Wildstein list and the confusion it caused led to public pressure to make archival documents in the IPN archives available to more of the public.<sup>132</sup> As a result of this incident Kieres denied journalists access to the archives later in 2005.<sup>133</sup>

The next event that further damaged the IPN's credibility came in the form of a press conference held by IPN director Leon Kieres in April of 2005. In the press conference Kieres announced that the IPN had proof that Father Hejmo, a prominent member of the Polish clergy, had been an agent for the SB.<sup>134</sup> Pope John Paul II's died shortly before the press conference. By coming out and making a statement to the media at such a sensitive time, Kieres damaged the

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<sup>128</sup> Mink, "Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?"

<sup>129</sup> AP, "Poland in Uproar over Leak of Spy Files," *The Guardian*, February 5, 2005, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/05/poland>.

<sup>130</sup> Szczerbiak, "Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case," 2015.

<sup>131</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>132</sup> Szczerbiak; Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

<sup>133</sup> Mink, "Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?"

<sup>134</sup> Szczerbiak, "Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case," 2015; Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau?"; Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

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image of the IPN as an apolitical or objective institution.<sup>135</sup> In addition to the press conference, different historians from the IPN took an active part in the public eye of clearing certain individuals but not others.<sup>136</sup> These incidents did not contribute to a view of the IPN as an independent institution.<sup>137</sup>

What followed was a period of “wild lustration” (*dzika lustracja*) where the media and the public through declassified documents increasingly dominated the lustration discourse, making accusations and undermining official lustration efforts.<sup>138</sup> The atmosphere was even more chaotic because the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections were approaching.<sup>139</sup> The conservative and nationalist PiS used this period of wild lustration to sow distrust in the current establishment, implying that many public officials had dark and hidden pasts.<sup>140</sup> It was in this environment that PiS and center-right PO, both being successors to AWS which had been dissolved, gained control of the parliament and the presidency in the 2005 elections. The former politically left party SLD suffered from the accusations against the establishment. While they had won power in 2001, they did not earn a single seat in the new Senate. Lastly, it was also in this environment that Kieres’s term as president of the IPN came to an end.

The period of control by PiS would represent significant changes to the IPN. PiS saw the IPN as a necessary tool to promote their “‘historical policy’ and a “moral revolution.””<sup>141</sup> The radical right saw the IPN as a necessary tool to promote its nationalist and anti-communist

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<sup>135</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>136</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>137</sup> Mink, “Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?”

<sup>138</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions”; Lavinia Stan, “Vigilante Justice and Unofficial Truth Projects,” in *Post-Communist Transitional Justice: Lessons from Twenty-Five Years of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 276–95, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107588516.006>.

<sup>139</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>140</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>141</sup> Terms as quoted by Behr in French from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, « Kieres przeprosza za listę » [« Kieres s' excuse pour la liste »], 19 fevrier 2005, « politique historique » and « révolution morale » Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?,” 6; Allison, “Residual History.”

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agenda.<sup>142</sup> Multiple processes were used by PiS to try to change and control the IPN during this period. The first was the election of Janusz Kurtyka as president of the IPN in December 2005. Kurtyka was in the same intellectual circles that agreed with PiS's narrative which they wanted to promote of Poland's identity as a victim and a hero.<sup>143</sup> While Kieres had left much of the actual internal functioning of the IPN to the managing directors, Kurtyka worked to concentrate power into his own hands while surrounding himself with people who held the same narrative of the Polish past as he did.<sup>144</sup>

The second thing that PiS did in an attempt to modify the IPN was to attempt to increase the IPN's power and influence through amending the law which had created the IPN, The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (*Ustawy o Instytucie Pamięci Narodowej - Komisji Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu*, AINR). The amendment process happened at the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007. The amendments to the AINR were also supported by PO who also at the time favored a more aggressive lustration policy.<sup>145</sup> The amendments were able to pass through parliament creating multiple changes to the IPN. The first major change was that the Public Interest Spokesman's office and Lustration Court which were originally created to carry out lustration activities outside the IPN was dissolved, and the Vetting Office (*Biuro Lustracyjne*, BL) was created inside the IPN.<sup>146</sup> While previously the IPN had only played an advisory and informational role in lustration, now the IPN was in charge of the entire lustration process and

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<sup>142</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"; Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

<sup>143</sup> Mink, "Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?"; Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"

<sup>144</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"

<sup>145</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

<sup>146</sup> Szczerbiak, "Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case," 2015; Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

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the prosecution of former Nazis and Communist crimes. Lastly, the statute of limitations was extended for crimes committed by the Communists, and the archives were opened up to journalists.<sup>147</sup>

Another major change created through these amendments was that the IPN would need to “present so-called ‘certificates of the past,’ based on its archives, [for] everybody who held a position of significant public responsibility.”<sup>148</sup> It also significantly broadened the category of who would need to give a declaration of collaboration, including over 50 professions, including an estimated 700,000 people.<sup>149</sup> The IPN was also tasked to create a list of all secret Communist agents.<sup>150</sup> Lastly the IPN was to put all of this information online, even before individuals who were accused had time to file an appeal.<sup>151</sup> The amendment also included harsher punishments for those who lied about themselves in the lustration process.<sup>152</sup> Lastly these new amendments significantly increased the funding of the IPN. The funding went from almost 123 million zloty to over 191 million zloty, the single largest increase to the IPN’s budget in the history of the IPN.<sup>153</sup>

The amendments became officially active March 15, 2007, and were met with both formal and informal opposition and criticism. Creating a single list of all Communist agents was impractical and lacked nuance, lumping all agents into a single category.<sup>154</sup> It required hundreds

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<sup>147</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>148</sup> Goddeeris, 265.

<sup>149</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions”; Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” 2015.

<sup>150</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>151</sup> Goddeeris. The information was only put online, “after having blacked out the names of third persons and of private information...” 265

<sup>152</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>153</sup> IPN Reports Part of this drastic increase is from the creation of the new Vetting Office (BL) which in its first year of operation consisted of almost 11% of its total employees. This change represents a significant increase in the funding and power of the IPN.

<sup>154</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

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of thousands of people to submit declarations, and the IPN was required to examine all of those declarations within six-months to a year of the passage of the amendment.<sup>155</sup> Many prominent figures refused to submit their declarations because they saw the new law as “populist polarization of society.”<sup>156</sup> In part because of a backlash from voters, PiS was removed from power in late 2007.<sup>157</sup>

The amendments also met with formal opposition. In May of 2007, the Polish Constitutional Tribunal found multiple parts of the amendments to be unconstitutional and struck them down. The Tribunal found the definition of the who had to submit declarations, and the definition of what state security organs constituted to be too broad.<sup>158</sup> The Court also struck down the punishments that had been added to those who failed to submit their declaration.<sup>159</sup> It also banned publicizing the lists of collaborators.<sup>160</sup> Lastly the Tribunal limited the ability of the IPN director to decide what archival material or other files could be withheld from academics and journalists.<sup>161</sup> Despite large parts of the new amendments being struck down, the IPN still gained control over the lustration process, as well as the increased budget, and in so doing increased its political power.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>156</sup> Goddeeris, 266.

<sup>157</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>158</sup> Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” 2015.

<sup>159</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>160</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>161</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>162</sup> Szczerbiak.



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### *Damage Control (2007-2015)*

Amid corruption allegations of corruption of far-right party Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland (*Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, SRP) leader Andrzej Lepper on September 7, 2007, the Polish government was dissolved, and new elections were held on 21 October 2007. The main opposition party to PiS in the 2007 parliamentary election was PO. PO and PiS were both conservative parties that had formed a coalition during the 2005 elections, but it fell apart in 2005. PO handily won the 2007 elections taking power away from PiS, in part as a backlash against PiS's lustration changes earlier that year.<sup>163</sup>

Following the 2007 elections the lustration debate left the forefront of political discourse. The gutting of the new lustration amendments by the Constitutional Tribunal created confusion around exactly what the new lustration policies were.<sup>164</sup> Additionally, while PO had supported the 2006-2007 amendments to the AINR, PO had also tried to keep lustration out of its priorities to placate the more liberal parts of Polish culture and media, which were in opposition of more radical lustration.<sup>165</sup> Lustration was also not high on prime minister Donald Tusk's agenda, especially after seeing the blowback from the 2007 amendments to the AINR by PiS.<sup>166</sup> Due to the loss of interest in lustration, the IPN faded the forefront of political debate.

In 2008 the topic of lustration, the Communist past, and the IPN would come back to the forefront of Polish society and politics. IPN director Janusz Kurtyka, who believed in promoting PiS's narrative of the Polish past, was still president of the IPN. In 2008 The IPN came under fire for publishing a book which claimed that Lech Walesa had been an informant for the SB in the

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<sup>163</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

<sup>164</sup> Szczerbiak, "Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case," 2015.

<sup>165</sup> Szczerbiak.

<sup>166</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

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early 1970s.<sup>167</sup> PO came to the defense of Walesa, claiming that the release of the book showed that the IPN had become a political tool of PiS.<sup>168</sup> Walesa had begun supporting PO with the rise of PiS in 2005, legitimizing PO to people who “identified with the Solidarity tradition.”<sup>169</sup> The debate over the release of the book and the politicization of the IPN brought the IPN and the Communist past back into the public sphere.

Due in large part to the controversy of the release of the book accusing Walesa in 2008 and the perceived politicization of the IPN in March the PO led government began working on an amendment to the AINR.<sup>170</sup> While the amendment was being debated there was a significant shock to the Polish government. In April, a plane crashed on the way to a 70-year anniversary commemoration of the Katyn massacre. Among those on the plane were Polish President Lech Kaczyński of PiS, President of the IPN Janusz Kurtyka, and 18 members of the Polish Parliament. The crash brought changes to the Polish government and the IPN.

After a complicated series of succession protocols, a presidential election was held in June and a runoff election in July of 2010, in which Bronisław Komorowski of PO was elected as president of Poland. The amendments that had been purposed by PO in 2010 were passed and then signed into law that same year by President Komorowski.<sup>171</sup> These amendments were an attempt by PO to depoliticize the IPN.<sup>172</sup> The amendments increased the number of people that could access the archives and simplified the process of accessing the archives which had been

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<sup>167</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”; Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” 2015; Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>168</sup> Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” 2015.

<sup>169</sup> Szczerbiak, 65.

<sup>170</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>171</sup> Mink, “Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010)”; Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”; Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>172</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”; Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”; Mink, “Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010).”

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advocated for a long time.<sup>173</sup> Another change was that council of the IPN was given more power in the process of choosing the IPN director, a power which had previously mostly been given to the Polish parliament. The amendment also changed how those on the IPN council were chosen, going from being more political appointees to being chosen by less partisan institutions or experts.<sup>174</sup>

It was not until June 2011 that Łukasz Kamiński was chosen as the new IPN director replacing acting president Franciszek Gryciuk. The era under Kamiński is largely seen as a time in which the IPN attempted to move back toward being a more independent and mostly apolitical institution.<sup>175</sup> Kamiński had worked at the IPN from its inception and was known for being a moderate, with a goal to keep historical research away from politics.<sup>176</sup> Under Kamiński the IPN was able to regain its reputation as an academic and an independent institution. This was in part because Kamiński worked to keep the IPN out of politics and the attention of the media.<sup>177</sup> Kamiński's job was made easier because of the aversion PO seemed to have around politicizing the past.<sup>178</sup> Kamiński did not want to totally overhaul the IPN, as he feared it could lead to whiplash every time a new IPN director started their term.<sup>179</sup> However, despite Kamiński's best efforts, this is exactly what has happened.

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<sup>173</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions"; Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"; Mink, "Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010)."

<sup>174</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions"; Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"

<sup>175</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

<sup>176</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>177</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>178</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>179</sup> Mink, "Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?,"

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### *PiS Victory and Control (2015-present)*

PiS again came to power in the 2015 elections, taking control of the Sejm, Senate, and the presidency. Following their rise to power new memory laws and amendments to the AINR were made. The first was a law passed on April 1, 2016 called the, “Act of April 1, 2016 on the prohibition of the promotion of communism or other totalitarian system by the names of organizational units, commune auxiliary units, buildings, public utility facilities and devices and monuments” which has been nicknamed the “street de-communization law”.<sup>180</sup> The law required that the “names of buildings, objects, and public service devices...” would need to change in order to not promote “communism or other totalitarian regimes...”<sup>181</sup> The law was then amended in 2017 to include monuments.<sup>182</sup> As part of this law the IPN was required to create a list of what locations would need to be renamed, which it did, eventually providing a list of 130 locations to be renamed.<sup>183</sup> This law pulled the IPN further into partisan politics, and further tainted its image as an independent institution.

PiS also passed amendments to the AINR itself, the first in the end of April 2016, taking affect in June of 2016. The organizational structure of the IPN was changed through this amendment. The GKŚZpNP and BL remained as they were. However, the BUiAD was changed into the Archives of the Institute of Remembrance (*Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, AIPN). Two new branches were added to the IPN. The first is the Office of Search and Identification (*Biuro Poszukiwań i Identyfikacji*, BPiI) which was created to find and identify

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<sup>180</sup> Uladzislau Belavusau, “The Rise of Memory Laws in Poland: An Adequate Tool to Counter Historical Disinformation?,” *Security and Human Rights* 29, no. 1–4 (December 12, 2018): 36–54, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02901011>.

<sup>181</sup> In Polish “Ustawa z dnia 1 kwietnia 2016 r. o zakazie propagowania komunizmu lub innego ustroju totalitarnego przez nazwy jednostek organizacyjnych, jednostek pomocniczych gminy, budowli, obiektów i urządzeń użyteczności publicznej oraz pomniki” at <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20160000744>, Belavusau, 40.

<sup>182</sup> Belavusau, “The Rise of Memory Laws in Poland.”

<sup>183</sup> Belavusau.

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the remains of people who “lost their lives as a result of the fight against the imposed totalitarian system or as a result of totalitarian repressions or ethnic cleansing from November 8, 1917 to July 31 1990.”<sup>184</sup> Another office that was created was the Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom (*Biuro Upamiętniania Walk i Męczeństwa*, BUWiM) which is responsible for commemorating historical events, places, and people, and maintaining sites that commemorate “the struggle and martyrdom” from Poland and other nations from 1917-1990 located in Poland and is also responsible for “the de-communization of public space.”<sup>185</sup>

The BEP was divided into two different offices, the first being the Historical Research Office (*Biuro Badań Historycznych*, BBH), which took over academic research as well as organizing events such as conferences, and “[releasing] academic publication sand materials to popularize historical knowledge.”<sup>186</sup> The other office created from the BEP was the National Education Office (*Biuro Edukacji Narodowej*, BEN) which took over the other activities of the BEP such as preparing materials and events such as classes, lectures, movies, and other educational materials, interviewing and recording firsthand accounts and “[organizing] campaigns and media events to promote knowledge of modern Polish history.”<sup>187</sup>

As part of this amendment to the IPN, some of the goals and mandates of the educational and publishing operations were changed. The educational offices of the IPN were now instructed to not publish material that had, “false historic contents that are harmful,

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<sup>184</sup> “Informacje o działalności IPN w okresie 1 stycznia 2020 r. – 31 grudnia 2020 r.” <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/o-ipn/informacje-o-dzialalnosc/143381,w-okresie-1-stycznia-2020-r-31-grudnia-2020-r.html> (Machine Translation by Google)

<sup>185</sup> Institute of National Remembrance, “The Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom,” The Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom, March 14, 2021, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/about-the-institute/offices/7813,The-Office-for-Commemorating-the-Struggle-and-Martyrdom.html>.

<sup>186</sup> Institute of National Remembrance, “The Historical Research Office,” The Historical Research Office, March 14, 2021, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/about-the-institute/offices/7805,The-Historical-Research-Office.html>.

<sup>187</sup> Institute of National Remembrance, “The National Education Office,” The National Educational Office, March 14, 2021, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/about-the-institute/offices/7799,The-National-Education-Office.html>.

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detrimental or libelous for the Republic of Poland of the Polish Nation in the country or abroad.”<sup>188</sup> Another change that came with the 2016 amendment was time period of research from the original dates of September 1, 1939 - July 31, 1990, to November 8, 1917 – July 31, 1990.<sup>189</sup>

The 2016 amendment also made an important change to how the director of the IPN was chosen. With the 2016 amendment the council was replaced by a college of 9 members who were once again politically appointed.<sup>190</sup> Previously, under the 2010 amendment to the IPN, the IPN council would have an “internal contest” to choose the new IPN president.<sup>191</sup> Now, the college would advise the Sejm on who it would choose with needed approval from the Senate.<sup>192</sup> PiS packed the college with its supporters<sup>193</sup>, thus taking effective control over who the next directors of the IPN would be while they remained in power.

It was shortly after this amendment that the new director of the IPN was chosen. The office was given to Jarosław Szarek in July of 2016. Jarosław Szarek had close ties with PiS, and campaigned asserting that Poles had little to do with the Jedwabne pogrom, and that it was mainly undertaken by the Germans.<sup>194</sup> One of his first actions at the IPN was to fire Krzysztof Persak, one of the authors of the original IPN report on Jedwabne.<sup>195</sup> Under the direction of Szarek the IPN was once again returning the political arena.<sup>196</sup> The IPN began publishing

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<sup>188</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, Article 1 Point 6 Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016 (based on: Dz.U. Polish Journal of Laws of 2016 items 152, 178, 677, 749)

[https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act\\_on\\_the\\_Institute\\_of\\_National\\_Remembrance](https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act_on_the_Institute_of_National_Remembrance)

<sup>189</sup> “Informacje o działalności IPN w okresie 1 stycznia 2020 r. – 31 grudnia 2020 r.” <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/o-ipn/informacje-o-dzialalnosc/143381,w-okresie-1-stycznia-2020-r-31-grudnia-2020-r.html> (Machine Translated by Google)

<sup>190</sup> Mink, “Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?”

<sup>191</sup> Mink, 1025.

<sup>192</sup> Mink, “Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?”

<sup>193</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions”; Mink, “Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?”

<sup>194</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>195</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>196</sup> Goddeeris.

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controversial documents such as a list of SS guards of Auschwitz, and more evidence linking Walesa to the SB.<sup>197</sup>

One of the most recent controversial changes to the IPN was the passage of the so-called “Holocaust law.” In February of 2018, another amendment to the AINR was passed. This amendment made it a crime to claim, “publicly and contrary to the facts, that the Polish Nation or the Republic of Poland is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich...”<sup>198</sup> The law was met with immediate backlash, especially internationally, including the academic community and the US State Department.<sup>199</sup> Internally there were Polish officials who praised the law including Polish Minister of Justice, Zbigniew Ziobro.<sup>200</sup> Due in large part to the backlash, in June of 2018, the AINR was again amended to exclude scholars and artists from being prosecuted, and changed violations from a criminal to a civil offense.<sup>201</sup>

In July of 2021 Szarek’s term ended, and Karol Nawrocki was chosen to be the next president of the IPN. Karol Nawrocki had served as the head of the BEP from 2009-2017, where he took over as the director of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk from 2017-2021. Nawrocki had been brought in as the head of the Gdańsk museum to replace the previous director Paweł Machcewicz who was dismissed amid a fight over the narrative presented in the museum.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>198</sup> “Ustawa z dnia 26 stycznia 2018 r.,” article 55a English translation as in Mailikoo (2021) and Hackmann (2018)

<sup>199</sup> “Poland’s Troubling Legislation,” *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed February 17, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/polands-troubling-legislation/>.

<sup>200</sup> Mälksoo, “Militant Democracy in International Relations.”

<sup>201</sup> Hackmann, “Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation.”

<sup>202</sup> Hackmann.

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## The IPN, the Polish Mythscape, and the Politics of Memory

### *Post-Communist Institutions and the Mythscape*

Institutions are an important part of any mythscape. Institutionalizing a myth gives it significant advantages, such as an incumbent advantage over other competing myths that have to overcome the hurdle of de-throning an already potentially entrenched myth. State institutions are especially powerful since they often enjoy the backing, prestige, and authority of the state. State institutions can also help to institutionalize or make permanent aspects of myths, such as road names after important individuals, state education, or the language that the state uses.

Institutionalizing a myth can also help mitigate long-term effects such as generational drift when those who share a collective memory of an event die. An institution can record and pass on that collective memory to future generations in an attempt to preserve it.<sup>203</sup> Controlling institutions, especially state institutions, gives a group the ability to establish, institutionalize, and promote their desired myth, making control of institutions such as the IPN a vital step to establish their myth as the dominant myth in the mythscape.

After the collapse of the USSR and Communism in CEE there was a wave of new national memory institutions with mandates to manage archival activities, educate, and perform research.<sup>204</sup> Some of these national memory institutions created include the National Memory Institute (*Ústav pamäti národa*) in Slovakia, the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (*Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů ÚSTR*) in the Czech Republic, the German BStU<sup>205</sup>, and of course the IPN. While institutions like these may have been created with the intention to be

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<sup>203</sup> Schudson, "The Past in the Present versus the Present in the Past."

<sup>204</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"

<sup>205</sup> Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic, (*Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*)



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independent historical and archival institutions, these institutions have been and continue to be influenced by domestic as well as international politics.<sup>206</sup> The IPN like other national memory institutions was created with at least some intention to be a historical and archival institution, and like other memory institutions it has been susceptible to political pressures from within and without Poland. The IPN has been, “the object of party politics under different ruling coalitions in Poland over the past fifteen years.”<sup>207</sup>

### ***The IPN as a Unique Institution***

While national memory institutions, especially those created in the aftermath of the collapse of Communism, have similarities, the IPN is in a class of its own. Firstly, the IPN was given a function that other comparable memory institutions were not. The German BStU, the Slovakian Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, and the ÚSTR all have the responsibilities of archiving, lustration, research, and education.<sup>208</sup> The IPN shares these same functions with the addition of a judicial function, specifically the prosecution of Communist and Nazi crimes.<sup>209</sup> The inclusion of this additional judicial responsibility at the IPN not only makes it unique from other such institutions but could also indicate a greater centralization of the Polish mythscape focused at the IPN.

Another difference between the IPN and other post-Communist memory institutions is the sheer size and budget of the IPN. Looking at funding alone, in 2009 the budget of the IPN was 50 million Euros, while the National Memory Institute and the ÚSTR had budgets of 1.6

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<sup>206</sup> Mink, “Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010).”

<sup>207</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions,” 256.

<sup>208</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>209</sup> Behr; Agnès Bensussan, Dorota Dakowska, and Nicolas Beaupré, “Les enjeux des archives des polices politiques communistes en Allemagne et en Pologne :: essai de comparaison,” *Genèses* 52, no. 3 (2003): 4, <https://doi.org/10.3917/gen.052.0004>.

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million and 10 million Euros respectively.<sup>210</sup> In 2009 the IPN had over 2100 employees, with the BStU having 1700, the National Memory Institution with 80, and the ÚSTR having 257 employees.<sup>211</sup> The IPN truly is “one of central Europe’s best-financed memory institutes...”<sup>212</sup> In 2020, the IPN had a budget of over 390 million zloty and had over 2500 employees.<sup>213</sup> The budget of the IPN has only been reduced twice, once in 2003 and once in 2019, and has been increased all other years since its creation. The IPN has more funding than much of Polish academia, which gives the IPN influence over the academic community in Poland which further contributes to its power on the Polish mythscape.<sup>214</sup>

### ***Addressing Electoral Politics and the IPN***

The electoral story surrounding the IPN is important but does not provide a wide enough lens to understand the importance of the IPN in Polish politics. The leading party in power which oversaw the creation of the IPN was AWS, the party that came from the Solidarity movement. It makes sense that the opposition to the post-Communist left would create an institution such as the IPN with a significant focus in the prosecution of former Communists. SLD would come to power in late 2001 to late 2005. Under SLD few changes were made to the IPN, which does not align to a strictly electoral story as SLD would have great reason to destroy or cripple the IPN. A coalition of PiS and PO came to power next, utilizing the politics of memory to leverage political power and discredit SLD.<sup>215</sup> However the PiS and PO coalition dissolved soon thereafter. It

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<sup>210</sup>The BStU had a budget larger than that of the IPN in 2009 90.3 million Euros, but it had over 400 less employees than the IPN (Behr 2011). Also, as pointed out by Bensussan et al (2003) there are other institutions which are just as well funded in Germany, meaning that while the BStU is better funded than the IPN, the BStU has other competing institutions, while in Poland there are not real comparable institutions to the IPN.

<sup>211</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>212</sup> Junes, “Whither Poland’s ‘Ministry of Historical Truth.’”

<sup>213</sup> “Informacje o działalności IPN w okresie 1 stycznia 2020 r. – 31 grudnia 2020 r.” <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/o-ipn/informacje-o-dzialalnosc/143381,w-okresie-1-stycznia-2020-r-31-grudnia-2020-r.html> (Machine Translated by Google)

<sup>214</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”; Allison, “Residual History.”

<sup>215</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

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would be from this point forward that PO would become the main opposition party to PiS, along with a coalition of more liberal parties. In an attempt to please the “...liberal-left Polish cultural and media establishment...”, PO would separate itself from the politics of memory and open mythmaking at the IPN.<sup>216</sup> PiS lost power in late 2007, at least in some part due to backlash of what was seen as overzealous lustration policies.<sup>217</sup> PO then became the major party in power until 2015, at which point PiS was able to gain power once again.

As previously mentioned, the IPN like other memory institutions is susceptible to outside politics.<sup>218</sup> However, a purely electoral story surrounding the IPN does not catch the nuance and complexity of the struggle over the IPN and its use as a political tool. If the story of the IPN was a purely an electoral one, it would swing like a pendulum as different parties with different goals came to power but this has proven not to be the case. Parties such as SLD and PO while in power did not make use of the IPN as a political tool or dismantle it. Instead they tried to minimize and insulate the IPN from takeover from parties such as PiS and to remove or reduce the open use of the IPN as a political tool. PiS on the other hand has and continues to put significant weight and resources in expanding and centralizing the IPN and its power in the Polish mythscape. The IPN has also not been a primary theatre in which Polish political parties compete, which limits the effectiveness of a purely electoral lens in an analysis of the IPN.

A purely electoral story in relation to the IPN cannot explain the contest over IPN, as gaining control of the IPN does not bring any sort of political gains to parties such as SLD and PO when they gain control of it. Instead, it is parties such as PiS who have attempted to reshape

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<sup>216</sup> Aleks Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” in *Post-Communist Transitional Justice: Lessons from Twenty-Five Years of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 51–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107588516.006>.

<sup>217</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>218</sup> Mink, “Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010).”

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the Polish mythscape through the politics of memory working toward a much more long-term political benefit. Electoral politics also cannot adequately explain why parties such as PiS would pour so many resources into capturing the IPN, even when some attempts to do so in the past have cost them politically. So, while electoral politics have shaped the IPN, it is with the addition of the lens of the politics of memory that the fight over the IPN and the goals to its use in increasing a group's power that the IPN and Polish mythscape as a whole can be understood.

### ***The Directorship of the IPN***

While electoral politics cannot adequately explain the fight over and use of the IPN as a political tool, it does have a significant impact on the IPN. This is in large part because the party in power at the end of the term of a director of the IPN can influence or in some circumstances choose the director of the IPN. Short of amending the AINR or passing laws which directly change or give directives to the IPN, both of which have been done multiple times, parties have to wait until a new director of the IPN needs to be chosen to take control the IPN. The ability for a party to choose their own choice of director at the IPN increased with the 2016 amendment to the AINR, which made the process of choosing the director more politically focused.<sup>219</sup> The appointment of a director is important because installing a director that shares a desired view of history and its use in politics or takes their orders from the party in power gives that party effective control of the IPN. The independence of the directorship of the IPN was initially established to help shield the IPN, at least in part from the drastic shifts from electoral politics<sup>220</sup> Instead of the IPN changing alongside dramatic swings of different political parties coming to power, barring outside political changes the IPN has periods of stability for the 5-year

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<sup>219</sup> Mink, "Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?"

<sup>220</sup> Stola, "Poland's Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?"; Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"

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term limit of each director, but this also means that if a party is able to install their choice of director they effectively gain control of the IPN for 5 years because the director of the IPN has control or influence over almost every aspect of the IPN.

### ***The Politics of Memory and the Fight for the IPN***

#### **A Tale of Two Factions**

The IPN has been the focal point of the politics of memory in Poland. A myth vacuum was created with the collapse of Communism in Poland with the need for a reformation or creation of a new national myth.<sup>221</sup> Like other CEE countries Poland had to also determine how if at all it would deal with its Communist past. Within Poland there was not agreement on a new national myth, and how to address the Communist past which led to a “fractured memory regime”, in which there was not a single unified myth or collective narrative<sup>222</sup>

Two main factions arose in the context of the fractured memory regime of post-Communist Poland. The first faction was made up largely of former Communists and more left leaning parties which advocated for the “thick line” policy of cutting off Poland from much of its Communist past.<sup>223</sup> Instead, this faction favors a more Eurocentric view of Poland within a broader European context, especially as Poland worked to strengthen its ties to the EU.<sup>224</sup> Instead of focusing on the past, this faction instead looked more toward Poland’s future as a part of Europe, purposefully avoiding the past as a political tool. This faction and its avoidance of dealing with the past and avoiding the use of history as a political tool behaves as a mnemonic

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<sup>221</sup> Д. С. Плотников, “ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ПОЛИТИКЕ ПАМЯТИ В ГОСУДАРСТВАХ – СОЮЗНИКАХ РОССИИ НА ПОСТСОВЕТСКОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ ПОСЛЕ 2014 ГОДА.”

<sup>222</sup> Kubik and Bernhard, “A Theory of the Politics of Memory,” 2014, 16–17.

<sup>223</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>224</sup> Clarke and Duber, “Polish Cultural Diplomacy and Historical Memory.”

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abnegator.”<sup>225</sup> However, in avoiding the use of the past as a political tool, this faction has cut itself off from much of the historical background and material which is needed in the creation of a new myth.

The other faction which arose is comprised of those who were more on the center and the right politically speaking, usually with anti-Communists views and a history of resistance against the Communist regime. This faction has had no qualms about using the Communist past as a political tool to assault its political rivals and build the foundation of a new Polish national myth. This faction has acted as mnemonic warriors with a singular and a non-compromising view of the past.<sup>226</sup> It was this faction that the myth of heroes and victims was created which highlights the struggle and sacrifice of Poles in creating and maintaining Polish independence, democratic ideals, and Christian values. This myth gained traction with the political right, such as with PiS.

#### *Gdansk Museum of the Second World War*

The differences and competition between these two factions is illustrated by the battle for control over the narrative of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk. Under the direction of Donald Tusk the museum was founded in December of 2008. The museum was created with the intent of putting Poland within a much broader context of WWII, and violent conflict as a whole.<sup>227</sup> This was more in line with a broader European narrative, such as the one promoted by the mnemonical abnegators. The museum was criticized by the mnemonic warriors for not properly highlighting the sacrifice and patriotism of Poles during WWII. Once PiS, who firmly leads the faction of mnemonic warriors, came to power in 2015 they attempted to

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<sup>225</sup> Bernhard and Kubik (2014) refer to groups such as this as “mnemonic abnegators”, which do not see any sort of political advantage of using the past as a political tool, especially if the said group could negatively be affected by using the past as a political tool. NEED PAGE NUMBER?

<sup>226</sup> Bernhard and Kubik (2014) refer to groups such as this as “mnemonic warriors”, which view the past as being “non-negotiable” (Pg 10) with “only one ‘true’ vision of the past.”

<sup>227</sup> Hackmann, “Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation.”

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dismantle the museum. However, the museum and its staff could not be immediately dismissed due to the museum's charter which guaranteed the independence of the museum and its director.<sup>228</sup> Instead a new museum, the Museum of Westerplatte, was created with which the Museum of the Second World War could be merged, undermining its independence.<sup>229</sup> A long legal battle ensued over the merging of the two museums, with the merger finally being approved in April of 2017.<sup>230</sup> With the merger PiS was able to transfer or force much of the old museum's leadership out, replacing the director of the museum Paweł Machcewicz with Karol Nawroski, who was the head of the Gdansk BEP office at the IPN.<sup>231</sup> Nawroski would later leave the directorship of the museum to become the director of the IPN in 2021.

#### *Abnegators, Warriors, and the IPN*

The IPN has been shaped by the contest between these two factions which were already engaged in battles over the Polish Communist past through issues such as lustration, and this conflict has shaped the IPN. The party who spear-headed the creation of the IPN was AWS, the party formed from the Solidarity movement, and opposition to the creation of the IPN was in large part from SLD a more left leaning party.<sup>232</sup> The IPN in studying the Communist past could be used to erode the "thick line" between the Communist past and the present. For mnemonic warriors such as AWS the IPN presented a special opportunity for creating an institution that could have considerable influence and control over the Polish mythscape and to establish their own myth.

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<sup>228</sup> Clarke and Duber, "Polish Cultural Diplomacy and Historical Memory."

<sup>229</sup> Clarke and Duber.

<sup>230</sup> Clarke and Duber.

<sup>231</sup> Clarke and Duber; Hackmann, "Defending the 'Good Name' of the Polish Nation."

<sup>232</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"

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However, despite being born into the contest between these two factions, the IPN was not immediately a site of overt political struggle. The first evidence of this initial distance from politics can be seen in the choice of the first IPN director. Instead of electing a director of the IPN friendly to the cause of the mnemonic warriors, as part of a compromise Leon Kieres who was not a solid member of either faction was chosen to be the first director of the IPN.<sup>233</sup> If the mnemonic warriors had so desired, they could have tried to pick a director who supported their view of history, but instead appointed a director who would not overtly use the IPN as a political cudgel. Open political use of the IPN could have jeopardized the legitimacy of the IPN.

The second piece of evidence that demonstrates that the IPN was at first not openly used as a tool in Polish politics was the IPN's study and investigation of the Jedwabne pogrom. As stated in the previous chapter, the research and investigation of Jedwabne was the first defining event IPN as an institution. The narrative produced by Gross which highlighted some Poles as being antisemitic and having collaborated with the Nazis directly contradicted the simplified narrative accepted by the Polish people, and the myth of heroes and victims.<sup>234</sup> Whether intentional or not the investigation of Jedwabne benefited the mnemonic warriors in the long-term. The investigation and the publicity from it secured the place of the IPN in the minds many of the Polish people as a legitimate organization.<sup>235</sup> By again not overtly using the IPN as a political weapon the IPN gained increased legitimacy and was cemented into the Polish mythscape which would ultimately benefit the mnemonic warriors.

While the IPN may have started out outside major political struggles, it did not stay that way for long. With the rise of PiS in 2005, the IPN fully entered the Polish mythscape as a

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<sup>233</sup> Behr; Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

<sup>234</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

<sup>235</sup> Goddeeris.



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mythmaking institution. PiS staunchly falls in the faction of mnemonic warriors and would come embody that faction. In its campaigning PiS purposely made use of Poland's past for its political purposes such as using the Communist past to sow mistrust of establishment officials and undermine the legitimacy the SLD controlled government.<sup>236</sup> While a single party or coalition cannot simply purge the IPN of those with opposing views, control of the directorship effectively provides nigh complete control over the IPN. Fortunately for PiS, the end of the directorship of Kieres coincided with their rise to power. This meant that PiS was able, with the assistance of PO, install their preferred director to the IPN, Janusz Kurtyka. Kurtyka would directly promote the myth of heroes and victims and utilize the IPN as a mythmaking institution and utilize the power of the directorship of the IPN to heavily influence and control the research, educational, and other activities of the IPN.<sup>237</sup>

It was also under the stewardship of Kurtyka and PiS that the IPN would become an even more powerful as a memory institution with the 2007 amendment incorporating the task of lustration into the IPN.<sup>238</sup> By centralizing lustration at the IPN, the IPN gained even more influence and control over the Polish mythscape. However, it was in part because of the open politicking of PiS with lustration and the IPN that contributed to their loss of power in 2007.<sup>239</sup> It would also be during this period PO would become the leading party of the mnemonic abnegators faction. PO had to rely on a coalition with more liberal parties which were mnemonic abnegators, thus PO was forced to become a member of the mnemonic abnegators themselves. It

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<sup>236</sup> Goddeeris.

<sup>237</sup> Goddeeris; Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"; Mink, "Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010)."

<sup>238</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"; Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

<sup>239</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions."

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would be while PO was in power that the events of Smolensk would lead to more changes at the IPN.

With the death of Kurtyka in 2010 in the Smolensk disaster, the directorship of the IPN was open once again. PO was in control at the time which meant they were able to oversee the appointment of Łukasz Kamiński, who was more of a mnemonic abnegator, as director of the IPN. Kamiński attempted to move the IPN out of the public spotlight as much as possible and distance itself from the media and the open myth making that had happened under the directorship of Kurtyka.<sup>240</sup> Despite the opportunity to appoint a director that could have made drastic changes to the IPN in an attempt to decrease the power of the mnemonic warriors, they did not. Instead Kamiński focused on smaller changes to the IPN. The best that could reasonably be done by PO to try and shield the IPN was to pass the 2010 amendment to the AINR, which in theory made it harder for a party such as PiS to simply politically appoint an IPN director, and thus control of the IPN.<sup>241</sup>

The efforts by PO and its coalition to keep the IPN shielded from mnemonic warriors such as PiS would prove inadequate. The coalition led by PO would lose power in 2015 with PiS once again coming to power. With Kamiński still director of the IPN, there was little PiS could do to gain direct control over the IPN, demonstrating that in some way, the directorship of the IPN could shield the IPN from the effects of outside political power struggles and electoral politics. However, PiS was able to pass a law on the decommunization of public spaces which had a mandate for the IPN to assist in the process of decommunization.<sup>242</sup> While PiS did not have

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<sup>240</sup> Goddeeris; Peters, “Remaking Polish National History: Reenactment over Reflection.”

<sup>241</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>242</sup> Belavusau, “The Rise of Memory Laws in Poland.”

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control over the directorship and thus the IPN, they found a way shape and direct the IPN from the outside.

Another success for PiS while Kamiński was director of the IPN was the passage of the 2016 amendment to the AINR. The 2016 amendment brought the largest changes to the IPN since the addition of lustration to the IPN in 2007. The 2016 amendment did two major things, it made the appointment of the IPN directorship easier for the party in power through a more political process, and further expanded the size and scope of the IPN.<sup>243</sup> The amendment dissolved the somewhat independent IPN council and replaced it with a more partisan college, negating the attempt of PO to further shield the IPN directorship with the 2010 amendment to the AINR. This allowed an easier appointment of a desired candidate as IPN director by the party in power.

The IPN also underwent significant changes to its mandate and structure with the 2016 amendment. The BUiAD was changed to the AIPN, the BEP was split into the BEN and BBH, and the BUWiM and BPiL were added to the IPN. The addition of the BUWiM and the BPiL brought further centralization of the Polish mythscape at the IPN, bringing more control of objects such as memorials and places of remembrance such as cemeteries under the control of the IPN.<sup>244</sup> In addition to this centralization and structural expansion, the mandate of the IPN itself was expanded with the 2016 amendment. The time period that the IPN was charged to research and educate the public was expanded from 1939-1990 to 1917-1990. Another change to the IPN's mandate came with added terms to the AINR such as "patriotic education", and

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<sup>243</sup> Mink, "Is There a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism?" "Informacje o działalności IPN w okresie 1 stycznia 2016 r. – 31 grudnia 2016 r." <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/o-ipn/informacje-o-dzialalnosc/39982,w-okresie-1-stycznia-2016-r-31-grudnia-2016-r.html> (Machine Translated by Google)

<sup>244</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016 (based on: Dz.U. Polish Journal of Laws of 2016 items 152, 178, 677, 749) [https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act\\_on\\_the\\_Institute\\_of\\_National\\_Remembrance](https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act_on_the_Institute_of_National_Remembrance)

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specifically mandated that the IPN not publish certain material which it found factually false and harmful to the public image of Poland.<sup>245</sup> All of these changes with the 2016 amendment further centralized the IPN as a mythmaking institution in the Polish mythscape

The end of Kamiński's term as IPN director ended in 2016. With PiS still in power, and the increased ability to install their own choice of director, Jarosław Szarek was chosen as the new director of the IPN. Szarek had similar views as PiS and would prove to be a good choice for the mnemonic warrior faction. One of the most prominent examples of mythmaking using the IPN would take place under Szarek's directorship, the passage of the 2018 amendment to the AINR commonly known as the "Holocaust Law".<sup>246</sup> A large part of the 2018 amendment was to protect the myth of heroes and victims, as the term "Polish death camps" which was being used globally was seen to imply that in some way the Poles had collaborated with the Nazis in the execution of the Holocaust.<sup>247</sup> The complexity and nuance of events, such as that of the Jedwabne pogrom, did not support the simplified version of history which exists as part of the myth of heroes and victims. PiS does not give any indication that it will cease to use the IPN as a tool to stop potential competing myths to the myth of heroes and victims, and to promote the myth of heroes and victims both domestically and abroad

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<sup>245</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.", The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, Article 53a Point 2 & 4 Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016 (based on: Dz.U. Polish Journal of Laws of 2016 items 152, 178, 677, 749)

[https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act\\_on\\_the\\_Institute\\_of\\_National\\_Remembrance](https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act_on_the_Institute_of_National_Remembrance)

<sup>246</sup> Hackmann, "Defending the 'Good Name' of the Polish Nation."

<sup>247</sup> Hackmann.

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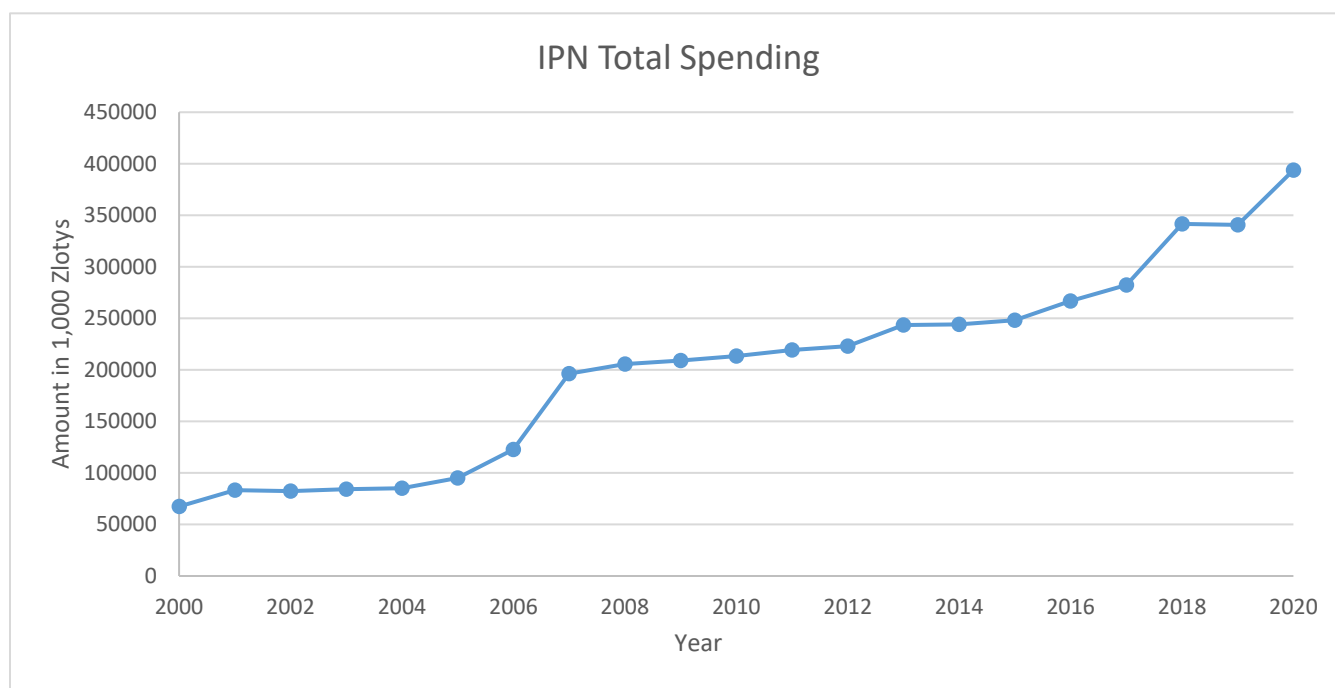
### *Mission Creep at the IPN*

The GKSZpNP and BL are both running into the end of their operational mandates to prosecute Nazi and Communist crimes and keep former Communists from holding public office because in the near future the statute of limitations of many of these crimes will end, and those who committed them or collaborated with the Communists will soon all be retried or dead. However, instead of shrinking as time has gone on, the IPN has increased in size, scope, and funding. The continued growth and salience of the IPN can in large part be attributed to both changes to the mandate and structure of the IPN and a major shift in focus of the IPN. Such changes include the expansion of its research mandate back to 1917 in the 2016 amendment to the IPN and the addition of lustration to the IPN in the 2007 amendment to the AINR. The most significant factor in the increasing power and salience of the IPN is a shift in focus toward education, research, and commemoration.

The continued growth and centralization of the IPN on the Polish mythscape can be seen in its budget, the number of conferences organized, exhibits, and publications produced by the IPN. There have only been two times in the history of the IPN in which its budget was decreased, in 2003 and 2019 and the years which saw the largest increase in spending were 2007, 2018 and

2020 (See Figure 2). The number of publications produced by the IPN's own publishing house<sup>248</sup> has seen a similar rise over time, going from 34 in 2003 to 308 in 2020 (See Figure 3).<sup>249</sup> The

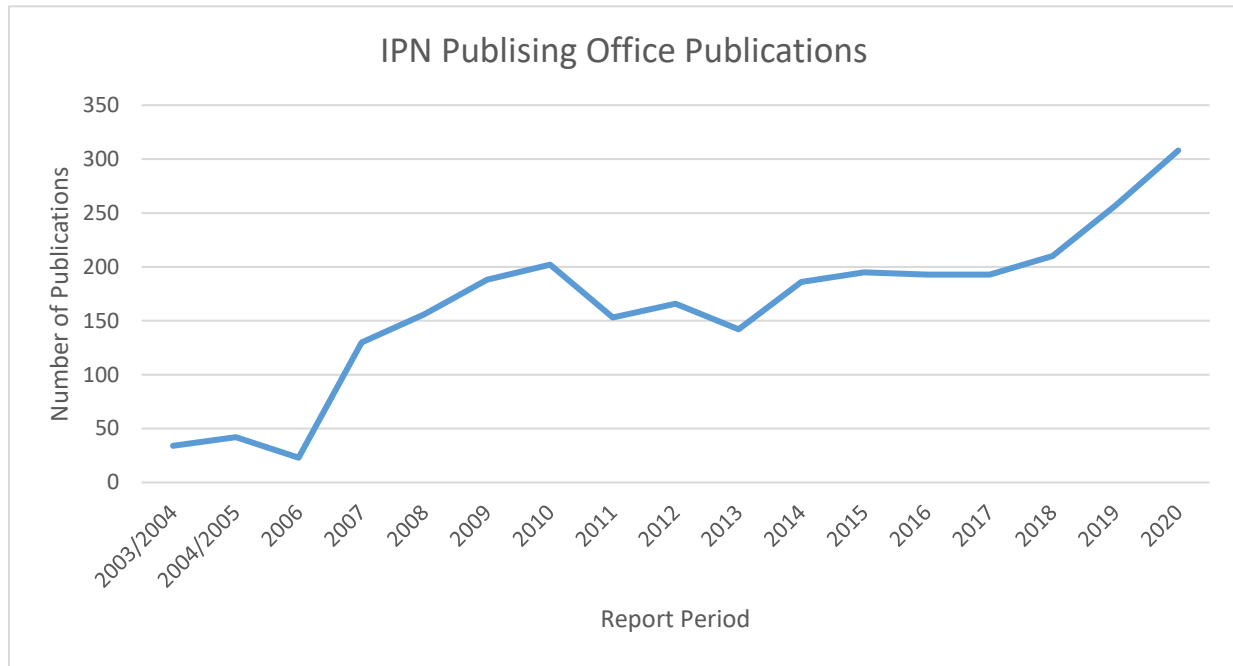
*Figure 2 Total IPN Spending (2000-2020)*



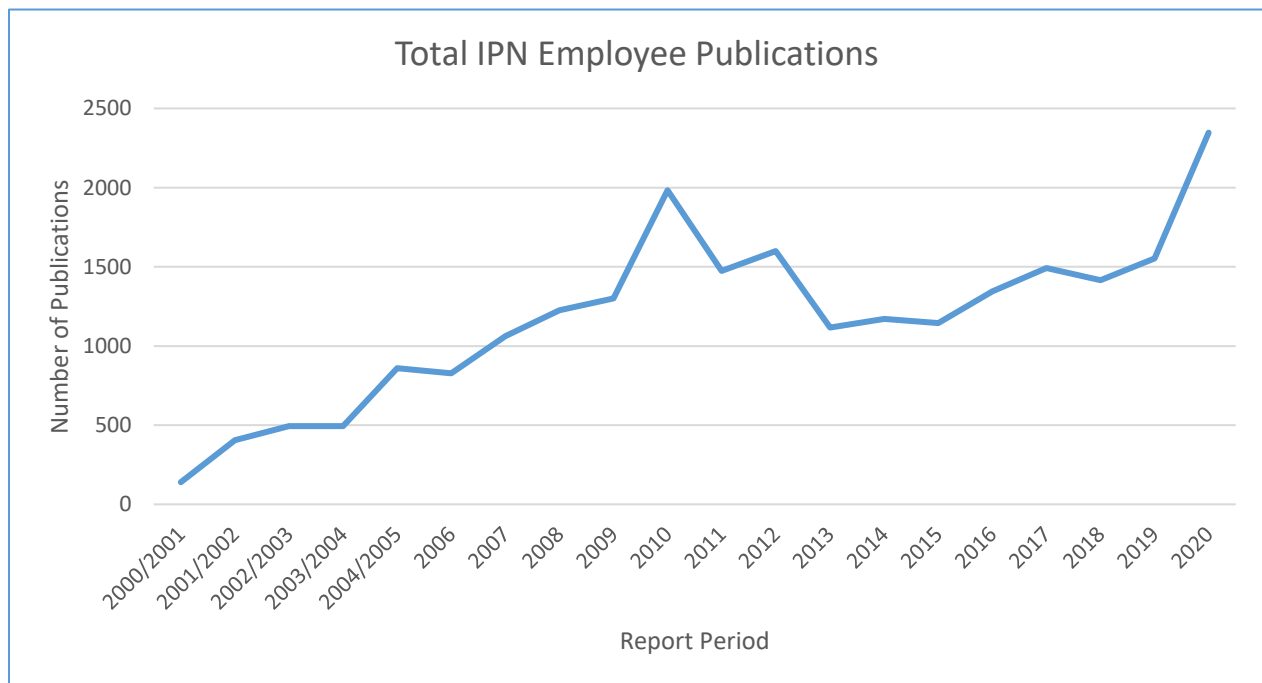
<sup>248</sup> Originally publications were produced by the IPN from within the BEP Publishing Department (*Wydział Wydawnictw BEP*). In February of 2017 the IPN Publishing House (*Wydawnictwo IPN*) was established, taking over the publishing and distribution activities of the IPN.

<sup>249</sup> The IPN releases a report every year which report its activities for that year. Originally the reports covered from July 1 of one year to June 30 of the next. For example, the first report produced by the IPN is from July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2001. The format of the reports changed starting in 2006 where the reporting period was changed to January 1 to December 31 of the same year. For the sake of simplicity, the first reports will be listed by the year in which they started, for example the period of July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2001, will be seen as the report for 2000. All of the yearly IPN reports can be obtained at <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/o-ipn/informacje-o-dzialalnosc>

*Figure 3 Total Publications by the IPN Publishing Office (2000-2020)*

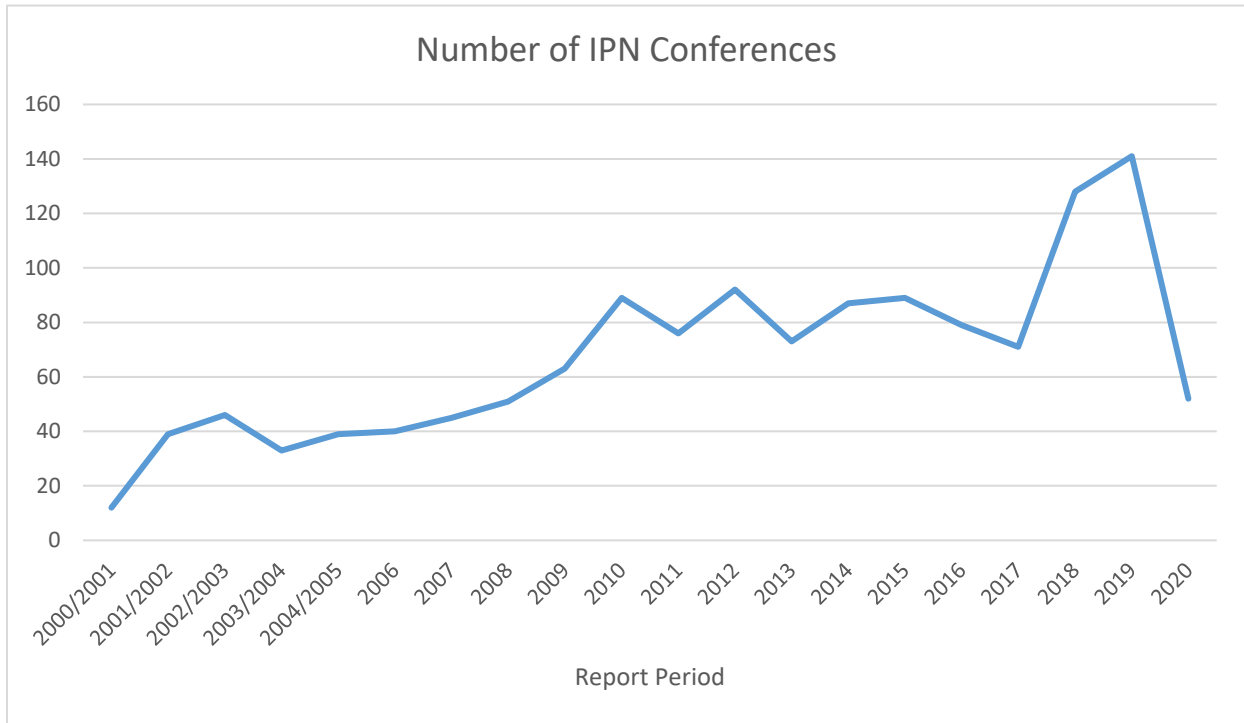


*Figure 4 Total Publications by IPN Employees (2000-2020)*

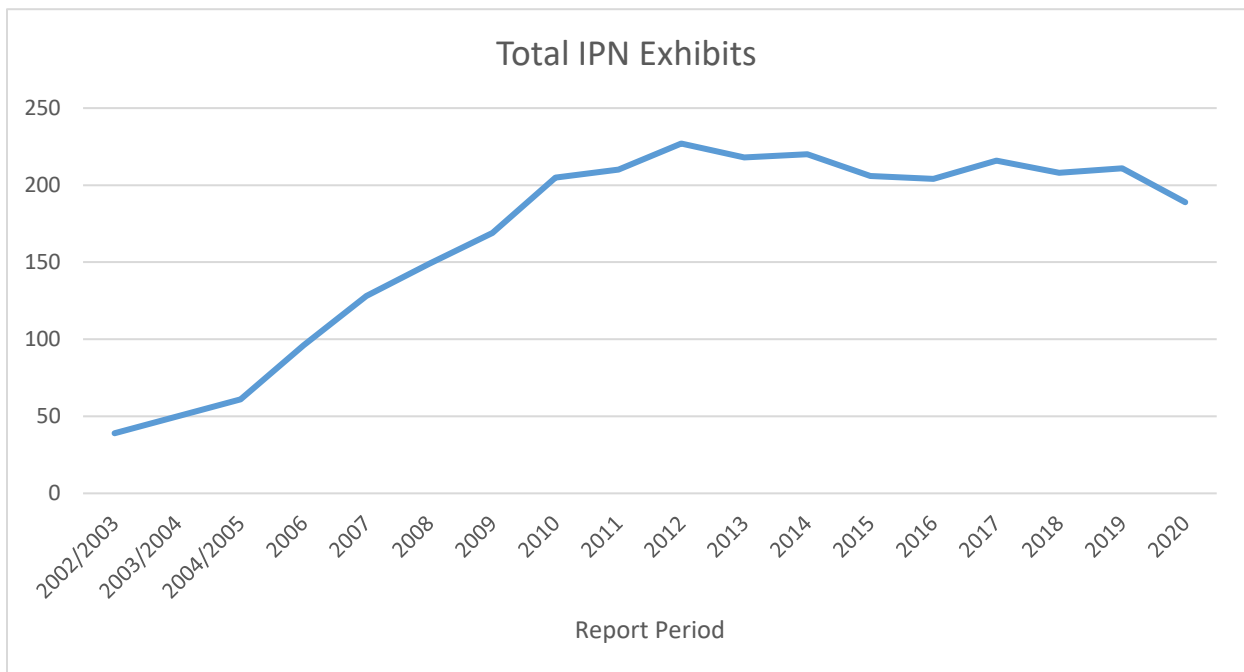


IPN also reports the number of publications produced by its employees which too has increased over time, going from 140 in the 2000 to 2347 in 2020 (See Figure 4). The number of

*Figure 5 Total Number of Conferences Hosted by the IPN (2000-2020)*



*Figure 5 Total Exhibits Hosted by the IPN (2000-2020)*



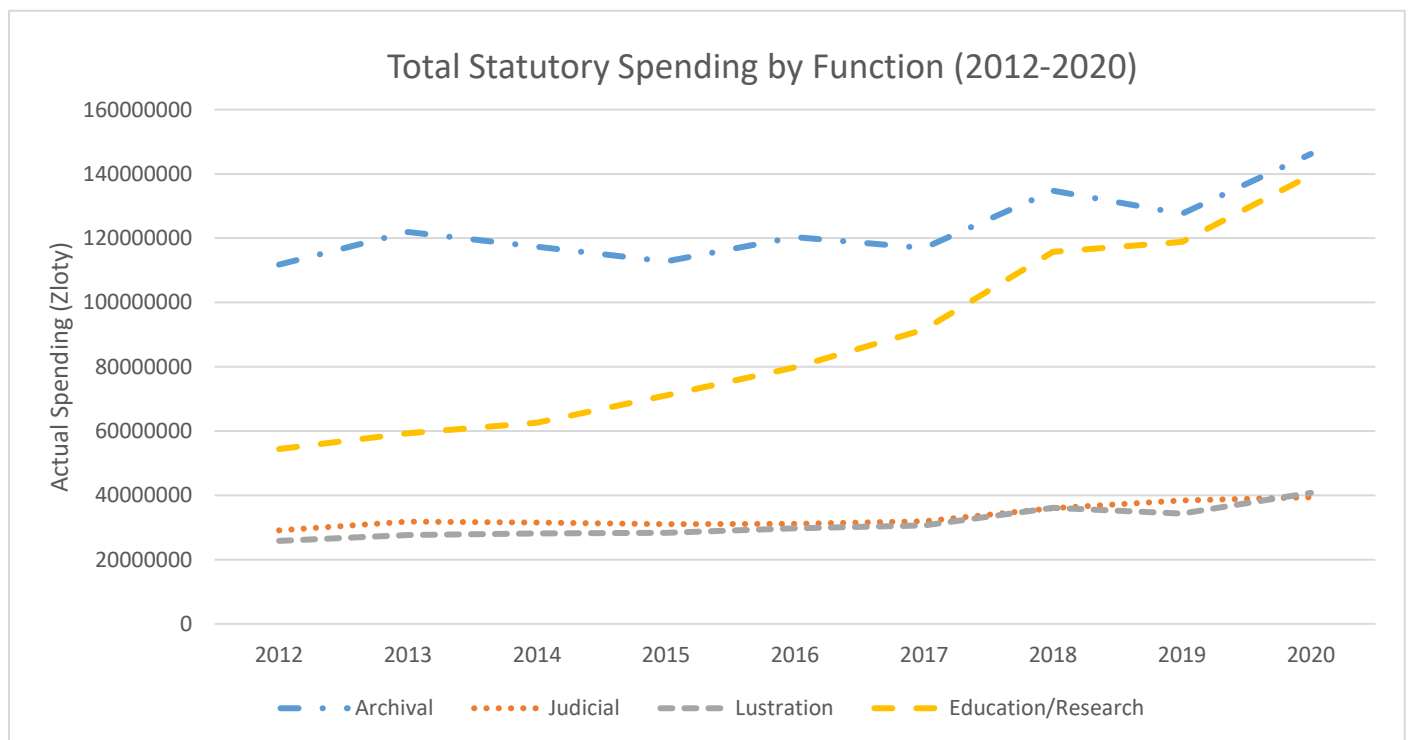
conferences organized by the IPN has also seen an increase over time, going from 12 in 2000 to 141 in 2019 (See Figure 5).<sup>250</sup> Lastly, the number of exhibits held by the IPN has increased over



time, going from 10 in 2000 to 189 in 2020 (See Figure 6). The changes in funding, the number of publications, conferences, and exhibits demonstrate the growth, permanence, and utilization of the IPN in the Polish mythscape as a mythmaking institution. Many of the largest increases occurring while PiS has been in power. However, when a more centric or liberal party such as PO has gained power, they have not tried to dismantle or even significantly cut funding to the IPN. Instead, all parties while in power have promoted or at least overseen the growth and expansion of the IPN.

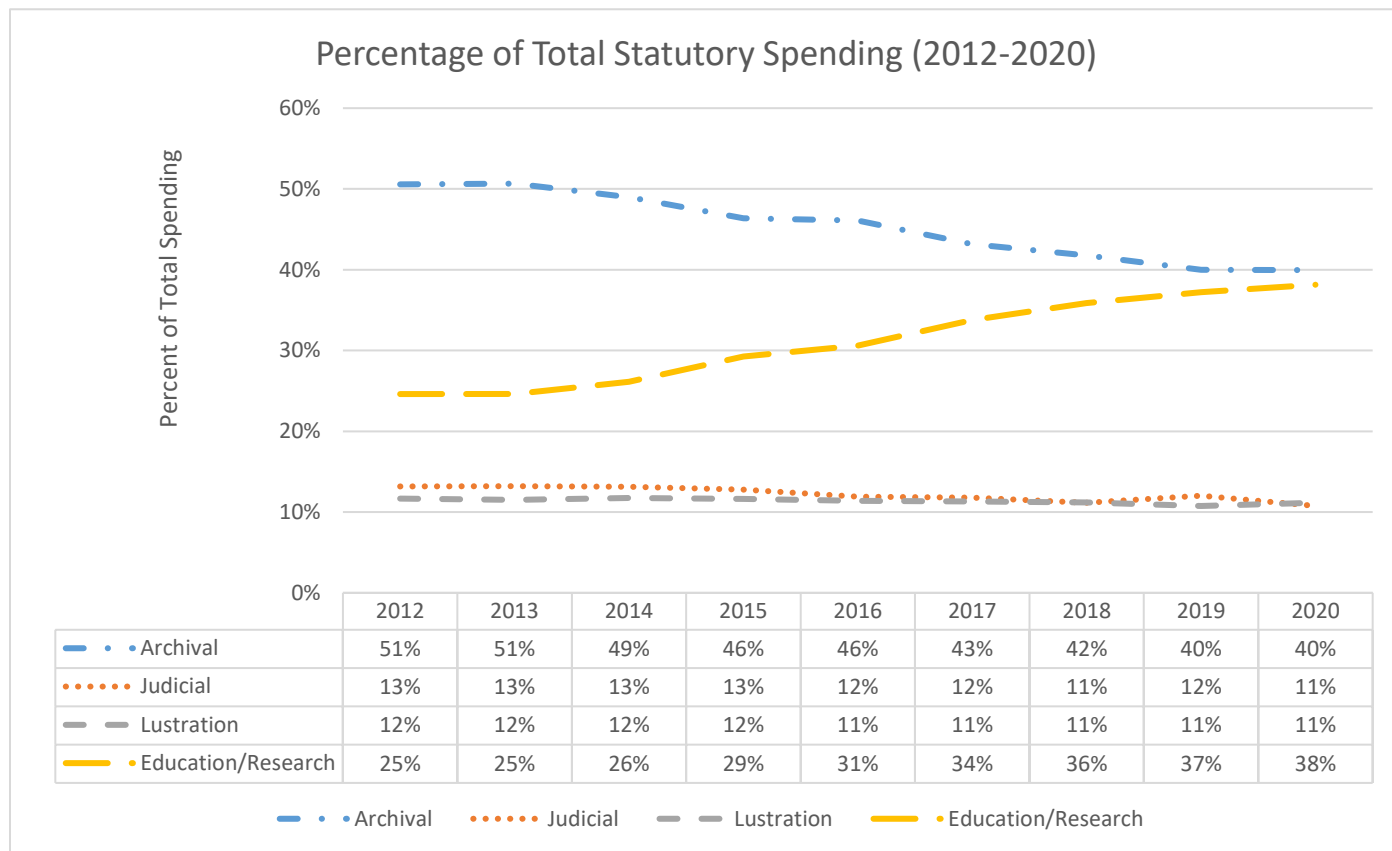
Digging deeper into the budget of the IPN there has been a change in focus of the IPN, as it further adopts its role as a mythmaking institution. The IPN releases reports which detail the budget and activities of the IPN. Starting in 2012 the IPN began to report the budget and spending based on the four categories of its statutory functions as laid out in the AINR. This

*Figure 7 IPN Statutory Spending by Function (2012-2020)*



<sup>250</sup> The number of conferences dropped in 2020 to 52, but this in large part can be explained by the Covid-19 Pandemic rather than a change in funding or interest.

Figure 8 IPN Percentage of Total IPN Statutory Spending by Function (2012-2020)



statutory spending is broken down in the reports into four main categories: archival functions, judicial functions, lustration functions, and research and education functions. An analysis of these four functions and their budgets illustrates how the focus of the IPN has changed since 2012. The budgets show a significant change in focus at the IPN away from its judicial and archival functions toward its functions of education and research.

The funding for all the functions of the IPN has increased over time, but there has been a notable change in the percentage of IPN spending being used for the different statutory functions, with the educational and research functions receiving an increasingly larger percentage of the IPN budget (See Figures 7 & 8). While the archival activities of the IPN have seen a significant increase, going from 111,789,400 zloty in 2012 to 148,795,000 zloty in 2020, the percentage of spending on archival functions dropped from 51% to 40%. The lustration and

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judicial activities of the IPN also saw increases to their budget over the same 2012-2020 period, but the percentage of lustration spending dropped from 12% to 11%, and judicial dropped from 13% to 11%. Educational and research activities went from a budget of 54,411,900 zloty to 139,614,000 zloty and went from 25% to 38% of statutory spending at the IPN. Since much of the mythmaking that takes place at the IPN falls under its education and research functions the increases in the percentage of spending on the research and educational functions demonstrate an increasing shift of the IPN away from a more neutral activities to more of a mythmaking institution.

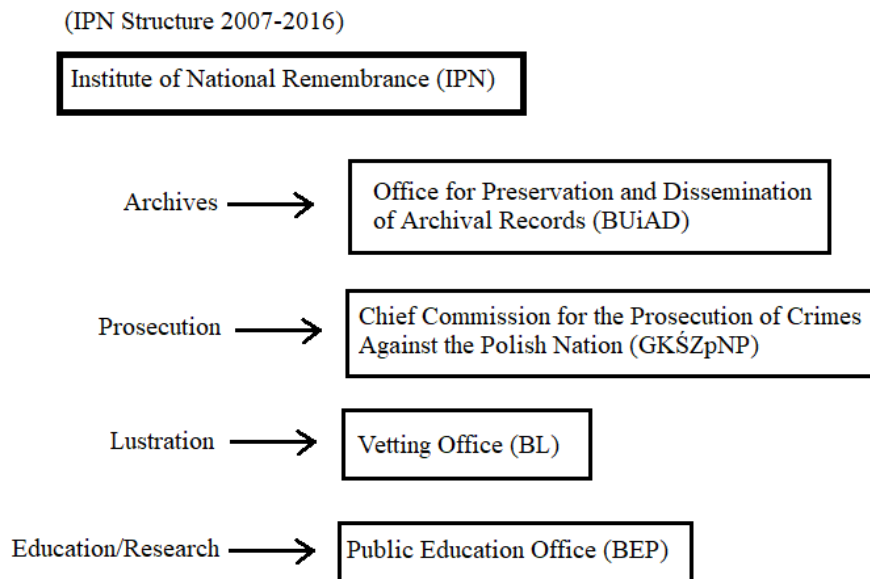
***Education, Research, and Commemoration - Branches of the IPN as a Mythmaking Institution***

The IPN has a tremendous amount of power and influence in the Polish mythscape with more power and involvement in Polish society than many Polish academic institutions. The mandate of the IPN gives it control over conducting lustration, prosecuting Nazi and Communist criminals, performing research, educational and popularization activities, and maintaining its archives. The IPN has its own internal publishing house which is used to produce many of its published and popularized materials. As a state institution the IPN enjoys more power and influence than other academic institutions in Poland. Yet the IPN is somewhat isolated from the volatility of electoral politics that other state institutions often have to contend with. All of these factors mean that the IPN can be involved in almost all parts of the mythmaking process and is in a unique position with an extraordinary number of resources and influence which give the IPN the ability to create, shape, and promote myths.

The IPN has the ability to control or influence most necessary aspects of mythmaking. Mythmaking requires the shaping and reconciliation of individual and collective memory with a wider narrative such as a myth, and a way to facilitate interaction between a myth and the present

which is needed for a myth to adapt and survive.<sup>251</sup> The shaping of collective memory and myth is done through selective remembering and forgetting, both of which the IPN has the ability to do. Not all of the branches of the IPN have equal effect on memory and myth. The BL, BUiAD/APIN, and GKŚZpNP have been involved in historical politics and the creation and shaping of myths, but less directly than the other branches. The main branches of the IPN that provide the necessary interaction and engagement between a myth and the present are the BEP, BEN, BBH, BPiL and BUWiD. These branches shape and influence the reconciliation of memory a myth through the materials they produce, the exhibits and events they organize, and the memorials which they create, remove, or maintain.

*Figure 9 IPN Main Branch Structure (2007-2016)*



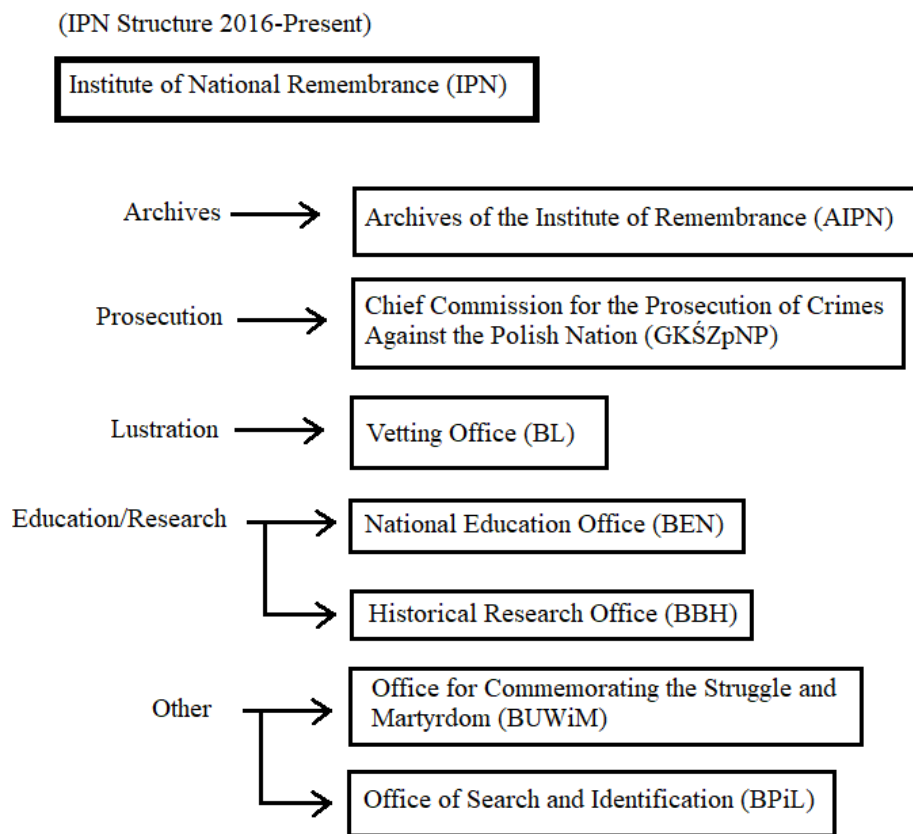
To understand the extent to which the IPN has power and influence in the Polish mythscape it is important to look at the main branches involved in the mythmaking process and the roles

that they play in that process. The brunt of mythmaking at the IPN before 2016 was done through the BEP. The BEP was in charge of academic research, cultural and educational activities, and

<sup>251</sup> Koczanowicz, "IN THE NAME OF THE NATION . . . IN THE NAME OF THE MARKET. WHAT WAS OUR REVOLUTION FOR?"; Lebow, "The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe"; Kubik and Bernhard, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," 2014.

more.<sup>252</sup> However, this changed with the 2016 amendment to the AINR which brought among other things structural changes to the IPN. The BEP was split into the BEN and BBH, and the BUWiM and BPiL were created. The IPN was expanded to cover even more aspects of remembrance such as memorials and cemeteries through the creation and mandates of the BUWiM and BPiL. Whereas before most of the mythmaking took place through the BEP, after 2016 the BEN, BBH, BPiL and the BUWiM were all the main branches for mythmaking at the IPN. Looking at these branches, their mandates, and responsibilities highlights the mythmaking at the IPN.

*Figure 10 IPN Main Branch Structure (2016-Present)*



<sup>252</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation dated 18 December 1998 (the consolidated text) ICC Legal Tools Database | The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (legal-tools.org)

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### *Education and Popularization (BEP/BEN)*

One of the largest forms of mythmaking at the IPN is the production of educational material. This was carried out by the BEP, and then after 2016 amendment the BEN. The scope and extent of the production of these materials has changed over the lifetime of the IPN. While the BEP/BEN does not directly create material such as textbooks used in public education, the BEP/BEN is responsible for other educational material, training, conferences, and events for both students and teachers.<sup>253</sup> It also as works in cooperation with educational and other institutions. The original AINR was not very specific on how the BEP was to cooperate with the existing educational and other institutional systems. However, in the 2016 amendment the BEN, which took over most of the educational activities of the BEP, was instructed to perform their educational duties, "...in cooperation with schools, universities, educational and cultural centres, associations, foundations, and other NGOs, as well as mass media..."<sup>254</sup> This expansion of cooperation between the IPN and other organizations, including international organizations and mass media, highlights the way in which the influence and power of the IPN has increased and has become intertwined with other actors in the Polish mythscape.

The expansion of the IPN in the Polish mythscape as a mythmaking institution can be seen in changes to the educational mandate of the BEP/BEN. In the original AINR the BEP was tasked with the educational activities of informing the Polish public about the "structures and

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<sup>253</sup> "Informacje o działalności IPN w okresie 1 stycznia 2016 r. – 31 grudnia 2016 r." <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/o-ipn/informacje-o-dzialalnosc/39982,w-okresie-1-stycznia-2016-r-31-grudnia-2016-r.html> (Machine Translated by Google), Institute of National Remembrance, "The National Education Office."

<sup>254</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016 (based on: Dz.U. Polish Journal of Laws of 2016 items 152, 178, 677, 749) [https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act\\_on\\_the\\_Institute\\_of\\_National\\_Remembrance](https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act_on_the_Institute_of_National_Remembrance)

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methods of action...”<sup>255</sup> of those who committed crimes against the “Polish Nation”<sup>256</sup>, “conduct[ing] academic research of recent Polish history...”<sup>257</sup> disseminating the material it produces, “carry[ing] on educational, exhibition and publication activities... and formulat[ing] conclusions relating to historical education.”<sup>258</sup> Depending on the director of the IPN and the amount of control they exert over the BEP/BEN, different conclusions can be made based on different interpretations of history allowing the educational materials produced by the IPN to be a tool for mythmaking.

While these original educational functions were not changed significantly in the 2016 amendment, significant instruction and details were added on how these activities would be executed. These new instructions included directions to disseminate “in the country and abroad the positions and opinions concerning the most important historic events for the Polish Nation...”,<sup>259</sup> “popularizing the post-partitions and recent history of Poland as an element of patriotic education...”<sup>260</sup>, to promote knowledge of how Poles and the Polish military fought “at the fronts...”<sup>261</sup> preventing the spread of “information and publications containing false historic contents that are harmful, detrimental or libellous...” of Poland “both in the country and abroad...”,<sup>262</sup> informing the Polish people about the ways in which crimes were committed against Poland, and “supporting social undertakings intended to promote patriotism and to

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<sup>255</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation Article 53 dated 18 December 1998 (the consolidated text) ICC Legal Tools Database | The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (legal-tools.org)

<sup>256</sup> *ibid*

<sup>257</sup> *ibid*

<sup>258</sup> *ibid*

<sup>259</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance Article 53j Point 1, Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016 (based on: Dz.U. Polish Journal of Laws of 2016 items 152, 178, 677, 749)

[https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act\\_on\\_the\\_Institute\\_of\\_National\\_Remembrance](https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act_on_the_Institute_of_National_Remembrance)

<sup>260</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance Article 53j Point 3, Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016

<sup>261</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance Article 53a Point 3, Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016

<sup>262</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance Article 53a Point 4, Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016

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strengthen the national identity.”<sup>263</sup> While these changes added more specifics, the mandate of the BEP/BEN was still left ambiguous, giving the BEP/BEN more flexibility than many of the other branches in its activities leaving it more open to mythmaking as well as mission creep. The new language added in the 2016 amendment also illustrates the shift in focus at the IPN from a supposedly historic and academic institution into an open mythmaking institution and highlights the expansion of the educational activities of the IPN and a centralization of the IPN in the Polish mythscape.

The specifications, or lack thereof, on how the BEP/BEN is to perform its duties also allows for an expanded its ability in mythmaking at the IPN. The IPN has significant control over what material is produced, and material that does not fit within parameters of a chosen myth can be considered false or harmful to the image of Poland, and thus not published or supported by the IPN. This was evident in the controversy surrounding the term “Polish Death Camps,” which was used in reference to concentration camps which were located in Poland during the Holocaust.<sup>264</sup> The term was seen as harmful and misleading as to Poland’s role in WWII and the Holocaust. Antisemitism during WWII and cooperation with the Nazis directly conflicts with the myth of heroes and victims which PiS and other mnemonic warriors support. Conflict over the term escalated until it peaked with an amendment to the AINR in 2018 which made it a crime to publicly claim that Poland worked with the Nazis in committing crimes during WWII.<sup>265</sup>

The BEP, and then the BEN in large part shape collective memory and its connection to myth in a plethora of ways. The BEP/BEN is in charge of the popularization of history and

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<sup>263</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance Article 53a, Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016 (based on: Dz.U. Polish Journal of Laws of 2016 items 152, 178, 677, 749)

[https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act\\_on\\_the\\_Institute\\_of\\_National\\_Remembrance](https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act_on_the_Institute_of_National_Remembrance)

<sup>264</sup> Hackmann, “Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation.”

<sup>265</sup> Largely in response to international backlash the 2018 amendment was soon amended again to change it from a crime to a civil offense and excluded some categories of persons from being prosecuted.



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historical activities. This popularization takes different forms such as classes or material used to teach in schools, workshops for teachers, lectures, seminars, competitions, educational trips, and various forms of media.<sup>266</sup> The BEP/BEN is also involved in a lot of aspects of Polish education and culture. The way that the popularization of history and portrayal of history in its educational and other materials can create, shape, and promote a myth.

The BEP/BEN has the most direct power in shaping collective memory out of all the branches of the IPN. As stated previously, the IPN does not directly choose what educational materials such as textbooks are required in schools, but the BEP/BEN provides other educational materials and activities including popularized materials, such as movies and games. The content produced by the BEP/BEN encourages and shapes the way in which Poles learn about and interact with their own history. This allows the BEP/BEN, along with the rest of the IPN, to have significant influence over the Polish mythscape. The BEP/BEN produces material that is appealing, simple and approachable, which is important to a myth as it must be simple enough to resonate with large swaths of the population. The most blatant mythmaking at the BEP/BEN can be seen in the popular materials it produces including, games, movies, events, exhibits, and more. The following examples illustrate the efforts of the BEP/BEN to influence formal education and reach outside the more formal educational sphere to shape the Polish mythscape.

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<sup>266</sup> “Informacje o działalności IPN w okresie 1 stycznia 2016 r. – 31 grudnia 2016 r.” <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/o-ipn/informacje-o-dzialalnosc/39982,w-okresie-1-stycznia-2016-r-31-grudnia-2016-r.html> (Machine Translated by Google)

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## Case Studies

### “Kolejka” and Other Games from the IPN.

The first example are the historical games produced by the BEP/BEN. The IPN has been producing board games since 2009, and as of 2020 has produced over 30 games.<sup>267</sup> The games created by the BEP/BEN are historically focused, such as games like “303” which highlights the heroism of Poles who served in the 303 Squadron in the Battle of Britain.<sup>268</sup> The games produced by the BEP/BEN often promote the heroism of Poles such as in the underground government of Poland during WWII. Many of these games also directly promote the myth of heroes and victims. Another game produced by the IPN is “*Niepodległa*” which means “Independent” which was created for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Poland’s reemergence as an independent country at the end of WWI. The game is a cooperative game in which the players work together ensure Poland’s independence.<sup>269</sup> The games produced by the IPN are often created to function as both an educational tool, and a source of enjoyment.<sup>270</sup> Through the processes of education and entertainment these games popularize myths, such as the myth of heroes and victims throughout Polish society.

The most popular games that the IPN has produced thus far is “*Kolejka*” or in English “Queue.” The game is set back in the 1980s PRL, as each player sends their family members to

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<sup>267</sup> Weronika Strzyżyńska, “‘We Had to Rewrite History’: How Poland Is Using Games to Shape Historical Memory,” *Notes From Poland* (blog), November 30, 2020, <https://notesfrompoland.com/2020/11/30/we-had-to-rewrite-history-how-poland-is-using-games-to-shape-historical-memory/>.

<sup>268</sup> Institute of National Remembrance, “Premiere of ‘303’ - a new educational board game of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) - Brussels, September 28, 2010,” Premiere of “303” - a new educational board game of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) - Brussels, September 28, 2010, September 29, 2010, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/454,Premiere-of-quot303quot-a-new-educational-board-game-of-the-Institute-of-Nationa.html>.

<sup>269</sup> Edukacja IPN, “*Niepodległa*,” Edukacja IPN, accessed May 3, 2022, <https://edukacja.ipn.gov.pl/edu/materialy-edukacyjne/gry/gry-planszow/82236,Niepodlegla.html>.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid

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stand in lines to get groceries and other items.<sup>271</sup> The game experienced a highly positive reception both domestically and internationally. The game was originally published in-house at the IPN, but because of such significant demand for the game the IPN had to license out its production to a commercial publisher.<sup>272</sup> As of late 2020 the game has been translated into at least 8 languages and has sold over a half a million copies.<sup>273</sup> Like many other games produced by the IPN “*Kolejka*” promotes a negative view of the Communist past.<sup>274</sup> The game illustrates the negative aspects of PRL, and the difficulties Poles had to deal with in their Communist past. “*Kolejka*” is one of many different examples of games the BEP/BEN has used to tap into popular culture to educate and promote a myth.

#### “The Unconquered” Movies/Films

Another way the BEP/BEN has tapped into popular culture to promote myths has been the production of multi-media materials such as videos. One of the most prominent examples is the video produced by the BEP/BEN entitled “The Unconquered”, an animated short film which was used as a replacement for the original film at the end of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk, which did not promote the myth of heroes and victims that PiS wanted the museum to do.<sup>275</sup> The video, almost more than any other material produced by the BEP/BEN, explicitly lays out plainly and promotes the myth of heroes and victims.

The video begins with the start of WWII, specifically with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the invasion of Poland from both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. In reference to the

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<sup>271</sup> Institute of National Remembrance, “English version of „Kolejka” game.,” English version of „Kolejka” game. - News -, July 19, 2011, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/512,English-version-of-Kolejka-game.html>.

<sup>272</sup> Strzyżyńska, “We Had to Rewrite History.,” IPN 2016 Report

<sup>273</sup> Strzyżyńska.

<sup>274</sup> melibee, “Kolejka: An Educational Board Game About Communism – MelibeeGlobal.Com,” January 29, 2011, <https://melibee.global.com/blog/2011/01/kolejka-an-educational-board-game-about-communism/>.

<sup>275</sup> Hackmann, “Defending the ‘Good Name’ of the Polish Nation.”

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invasion the movie states, “We don’t give up, despite being left on our own.”<sup>276</sup> The video highlights how Poles saved Jews at their own risk, claiming that Poland was the first to warn the West about the Holocaust but, “...nobody listens to us.”<sup>277</sup> After highlighting more important and heroic events of Poles during WWII the video states, “But in exchange for all that we do, we are betrayed...”<sup>278</sup> in reference to the ceding of Poland to the Communist sphere of influence by the West at the end of WWII. The video then highlights Polish resistance against the Soviets and PRL, and states that it is not until the Iron Curtain falls that “The war is over.”<sup>279</sup> The video ends with a quote attributed to Polish General Witold Urbanowicz who fought with the 303 Fighter Squadron, “Because we do not beg for freedom, we fight for it.”<sup>280</sup> The video is posted on the IPN’s YouTube channel IPNtv both in Polish and in English. As of March 22, 2022, the English version has over 2.3 million views, and the Polish version has over 6.6 million views.

The BEP/BEN has produced other videos to promote the myth of heroes and victims. While less popular than its predecessor, a prequel was created for “The Unconquered” called “Unconquered: Trying Times.” The video has similar themes as the “The Unconquered”, highlighting the sacrifice of Poles in order to protect themselves and the West, such as how the video claims that because of Poland’s sacrifices and defeat of the Red Army in Polish-Soviet War that, “Europe is spared the bloodshed of the Communist revolution.”<sup>281</sup> These videos and others like them that are produced by the BEP/BEN present a clear and simplified narrative of heroism and sacrifice which comprises the myth of heroes and victims, and illustrates mythmaking taking place at the IPN.

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<sup>276</sup> IPNtvPL, *IPNtv: The Unconquered*, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q88AkN1hNYM>.

<sup>277</sup> *ibid*

<sup>278</sup> *ibid*

<sup>279</sup> *ibid*

<sup>280</sup> *ibid*

<sup>281</sup> IPNtvPL, *IPNtv: Unconquered: Trying Times*, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WIoJMs6HIU>.

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## The Cursed Soldiers

Another process of mythmaking that the BEP/BEN performs is hosting events and competitions. One such event was held in 2017 was puzzle room centered around the theme of the “cursed soldiers” (*żołnierze wyklęci*).<sup>282</sup> The “cursed soldiers” are an archetype of the heroes and victims myth. They were Polish partisans who continued to fight starting in 1944 in opposition Soviet control and the new Communist government. Once it started to gain traction the narrative of the “cursed soldiers” was picked up with fairly uniform support from both the right and left.<sup>283</sup> However, for a long time, these resistance groups were referred to mostly as partisans in the academic material created by the IPN, and as “cursed soldiers” in the popularized material keeping the two terms separate.<sup>284</sup> However, according to Peters with the former anti-Communist leadership being portrayed in an increasingly negative light PiS has turned toward and raised the status and importance of the “cursed soldiers” as heroes to fill in the gap.<sup>285</sup>

The promotion of the “cursed soldiers” can also be seen in other material published by the IPN. The IPN’s website currently has a collection of content on the “cursed soldiers”. In the collection is an article written by the current director of the IPN, Karol Nawrocki. In it Nawrocki states that while the regimes they fought called them, “‘bandits’ and ‘enemies of the people.’ Today we are restoring the Cursed Soldiers to their rightful place in the national pantheon.” At the end of the article Nawrocki claims that there has been a shift in attitudes in Poland towards the “cursed soldiers”, stating that, “This change is owed a great deal to the efforts of the Institute of National Remembrance...”<sup>286</sup> The narrative of the ‘cursed soldiers’ which has been heavily

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<sup>282</sup> Peters, “Remaking Polish National History: Reenactment over Reflection.”

<sup>283</sup> Peters.

<sup>284</sup> Kończal, “The Invention of the ‘Cursed Soldiers’ and Its Opponents.”

<sup>285</sup> Peters, “Remaking Polish National History: Reenactment over Reflection.”

<sup>286</sup> Karol Nawrocki, “ARTICLE by Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D.: The soldiers of Polish freedom,” Institute of National Remembrance, March 3, 2022, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/9332,ARTICLE-by-Karol-Nawrocki-PhD-The-soldiers-of-Polish-freedom.html>.

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promoted by the mnemonic warriors through the IPN supports the myth of heroes and victims, and shows the tools and power the IPN has in influencing the Polish mythscape.

### Conclusion (BEP/BEN)

Using material such as games, films, exhibits, and online materials is effective in both popularizing and institutionalizing myths. The myth of heroes and victims has been promoted extremely well by those such as PiS through the IPN, especially the BEP/BEN. The materials produced by the BEP/BEN are stylized in a way which makes them highly attractive to large swaths of the population. The material is often simplified making the narrative which they promote easier for the broader public to understand. Like other myths, the myth of heroes and victims portrays history as black and white, and a battle between the forces of good and evil. These materials are also made with extremely high production quality, making them even more attractive to the Polish public, as well as the internationally. Groups who effectively use the BEP/BEN, such as PiS, cannot only promote a myth, but engrain it into Polish society, shaping the collective memory and identity of the Polish people. They can highlight the myth which they wish to promote, and influence Poles interactions with the past, and importantly what is to be remembered and forgotten.

### *Academic Research: Shaping and Controlling the Mythscape (BEP/BBH)*

Part of the IPN's mythmaking activities come from the research performed by the BEP/BBH. Academic research was first performed at the IPN by the BEP and then after the 2016 amendment the BBH. For parts of its history, it can be argued that the IPN, or at least the academic research that it performed, represented the work of an independent academic institution such as was performed about Jedwabne.<sup>287</sup> Whether initially true or not, over the life of the IPN

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<sup>287</sup> Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions"; Peters, "Remaking Polish National History: Reenactment over Reflection."

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this has not proven to be the case. The BEP/BBH have significant resources to have an impact on the Polish mythscape than traditional Polish academic institutions. Like the other branches of the IPN the BEP/BBH has been extremely susceptible to outside political influence, especially through the influence and control of the directorship of the IPN. The IPN has more influence on the Polish mythscape than other academic institutions in large part because it has the support and power of a state institution and is more directly involved in shaping the views of the Polish people. The BEP/BBH is not only charged with research on the topics covered by its mandate, it is also charged with interpreting that information and educating the Polish people based on its interpretations of that research.

One of the unique powers the IPN has compared to other national memory institutes is that the IPN has significant influence over the academic environment in Poland. The IPN is significantly better funded than Polish academia and is thus better able to provide jobs to doctoral students and those entering the historic academic field.<sup>288</sup> As of 2011, researchers working for the BEP are given a salary that is 20-30% more than working at a university.<sup>289</sup> As a result, the IPN employs many of those entering the historic academic field in Poland. Other Polish academic institutions receive support, such as access to the IPN archives or funding assistance from the IPN.<sup>290</sup> In addition to this, many historians in Poland have joint jobs with the IPN and other academic institutions.<sup>291</sup> With much of Polish academia employed by or supported by the IPN, the IPN has significant influence over the Polish academic landscape.<sup>292</sup> With the IPN being so interconnected with academia, many paths in historic academia in Poland lead into

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<sup>288</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"

<sup>289</sup> Behr.

<sup>290</sup> Behr, "Historical Policy-Making in Post-1989 Poland."

<sup>291</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"; Behr, "Historical Policy-Making in Post-1989 Poland."

<sup>292</sup> Behr, "Historical Policy-Making in Post-1989 Poland."

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and from the IPN. Another advantage that the IPN has over other mythmaking institutions is that the narrative produced by its research is often seen as the official position of the state because it is a state institution. The influence and advantages over the Polish academic landscape means that the BEP/BBH has significant control in shaping or controlling the Polish mythscape.

The mythmaking taking place at the BEP/BBH has not gone unnoticed. The IPN has drawn criticism, especially internationally from academics accusing it of being a political tool rather than an academic historical institution. Mink claims that there are “‘activist’ historian-archivists” who work at national memory institutions such as the IPN.<sup>293</sup> Instead of being purely after the search of the truth, these actors use history to benefit their own or their party’s or faction’s political agenda.<sup>294</sup> These actors have more influence than other academics because the media tends to invite them to talk over other historians, in part because “activist” historians are more willing to accept and promote a more exciting and less nuanced view of history.<sup>295</sup> While there are those in the IPN who do behave as militant or activist historians, the work of Behr has shown that most of the employees at the IPN do not fall under this category.<sup>296</sup> Instead, because of its better funding and prominence in the Polish academic community, the IPN serves as a stepping-stone for many Polish academics in order to gain access to the Polish academic community.<sup>297</sup> While there may only be a small group of historians and researchers who are at the IPN there for political purposes, many historians in Poland have or do work for in some capacity the IPN at some point in their careers. The funneling of historical academia through the

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<sup>293</sup> Mink, “Institutions of National Memory in Post-Communist Europe: From Transitional Justice to Political Uses of Biographies (1989-2010).”

<sup>294</sup> Mink.

<sup>295</sup> Mink; Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

<sup>296</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>297</sup> Behr; Behr, “Historical Policy-Making in Post-1989 Poland.”



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IPN potentially gives it significant influence over the academic community, and the Polish mythscape as a whole.

Due to its contested image as an academic institution, a downside of working at the IPN is that some historians can be stigmatized for doing so, both from inside and outside of Poland. That being said, working for the IPN can come with a certain amount of prestige and an unrivalled access to archival material. Criticism of the IPN and the activities of the BEP/BBH from within Poland seems more tempered, and considering the influence and interconnectedness of the IPN and Polish academia this is not surprising. All this being said, the IPN does not have a total monopoly over the Polish academic landscape,<sup>298</sup> but the dominance of the IPN does not allow for “a plurality of perspectives and methodologies...”<sup>299</sup>

The IPN and Polish academia differ in some other important ways. Firstly, those in Polish academia have more agency on what they choose to research. Research at the IPN is mostly limited by two major factors, the agenda and involvement of the IPN director, and the time period and material of which its mandate covers. What is researched at the IPN is highly influenced by the agenda, or lack thereof, of the director of the IPN.<sup>300</sup> Secondly, the materials that researchers in the IPN use to do their research rely almost exclusively on the archival records at the IPN.<sup>301</sup> The limited use of research materials significantly limits the scope of research, and can effect the perception of the relationship between the people and the PRL, often creating a more polarized version of the Polish past.<sup>302</sup> Another point of criticism that has been raised about the research performed by the BEP/BBH has been an increased focus on quantity

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<sup>298</sup> Allison, “Residual History”; Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”

<sup>299</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?,” 55.

<sup>300</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”

<sup>301</sup> Behr.

<sup>302</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”

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over quality. According to some who have worked at the IPN, there has been an increase in the quantity of research that is asked to be produced, and that this change has come at the cost of the quality of the research performed at the IPN.<sup>303</sup> Looking at the number of publications published by the IPN there has been a fairly significant increase over time (See figure 3), which supports this theory. Lastly, the BEP/BBH is limited by its mandate of what topics and time periods its research should cover. The IPN was created specifically to focus on Nazi and Communist crimes and regimes, limiting its research from 1939-1989, and after the 2016 amendment 1917-1989. This limitation on the scope of Polish history of research produced by the IPN limits the perspective of the research produced by the BEP/BBH.

Another important way that the BEP/BBH differs from the rest of Polish academia is its relationship with the Polish media. In Poland, as in other areas of the world there has been a shift in the power of academic institutions over the mythscape. Academic and other institutions are becoming increasingly less powerful in the mythscape, with the media taking over as one of the main sculptures and influencers of the mythscape.<sup>304</sup> The IPN has had a complex relationship with the media, including historians and archivists at the IPN who have leaked documents to the media to promote “informal lustration”.<sup>305</sup> Conversely, there have also been those such as IPN director Łukasz Kamiński who have tried to remove the IPN from media attention as much as possible.<sup>306</sup> Whether positive or negative, the attention of the media on the IPN means that the IPN has gained significant public attention. This extra attention in the lives of Poles can lead

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<sup>303</sup> Behr, “Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?”; Behr, “Historical Policy-Making in Post-1989 Poland.”

<sup>304</sup> Baldys and Piątek, “Memory Politicized. Polish Media and Politics of Memory - Case Studies”; Behr, “Historical Policy-Making in Post-1989 Poland”; Allison, “Residual History”; Волчкова, “Миф как форма воспроизводства и отражения политического бытия.”

<sup>305</sup> Szczerbiak, “Explaining Late Lustration Programs: Lessons from the Polish Case,” 2015.

<sup>306</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”

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to more interaction of myths in the present. Over time the IPN has become ingrained into the Polish mythscape and in the minds of the Polish people.

### Conclusion BEP/BBH

The academic landscape makes up an important part of the mythscape. The IPN, through research performed, and increased funding, first by the BEP and then after 2016 the BBH has gained significant influence over the Polish academic landscape. The IPN is significantly better funded than the rest of Polish academia, and it also enjoys the prestige and support of being a state institution. While academia has had a declining relationship with the modern mythscape, the complex relationship between the IPN and the media, whether positive or negative, has ensured a persistence of the IPN in the minds of the Polish people. The influence of the IPN over and interconnection with Polish academia, and its relationship with the media have only increased the capacity of the IPN as a mythmaking institution.

### *Commemoration: Engagement with the Past in the Present (BUWiM)*

Throughout its existence, the IPN has continued to grow in both its size and its mandated mission. One such event was the change to the IPN through the 2016 amendment to the AINR where the Council for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom (*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*) which had been in operation since 1988 was dissolved, and its functions were incorporated into the IPN under the new Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom (*Biuro Upamiętniania Walk i Męczeństwa*, BUWiM).<sup>307</sup> Despite these changes, most of the actions performed by the BUWiM and its predecessor have not really changed. A mostly independent institution was dissolved and reformed under the jurisdiction and control of

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<sup>307</sup> “Informacje o działalności IPN w okresie 1 stycznia 2016 r. – 31 grudnia 2016 r.” <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/o-ipn/informacje-o-dzialalnosc/39982,w-okresie-1-stycznia-2016-r-31-grudnia-2016-r.html> (Machine Translated by Google)

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the IPN. The dissolution of the Council for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom and the creation of the BUWiM further illustrates the centralization of mythmaking at the IPN, and its growing influence over the Polish mythscape.

Another important change to commemoration in Poland via the IPN was the added role of decommunization. The IPN created a list and issues opinions of locations to be renamed.<sup>308</sup> This position further gives the IPN more control and power in the mythmaking process and the control of the Polish mythscape. Myths need interaction with the present to stay relevant. If the streets, memorials, and other commemorative places or events are systematically removed from Polish society, a new myth will have a much harder time competing due to the loss of the daily interactions Poles have with these names and places. This is further exacerbated by the fact that those in Poland who lived through WWII and the PRL are becoming increasingly less common. As they die, the living memory of the times before, during and after WWII and the collapse of the Iron Curtain will die with them. Without the interaction between the people's individual and collective memory and the physical spaces of remembrance, the mythscape of Poland will significantly change over time, favoring the myths that marginalize or vilify Poland's Communist past.

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<sup>308</sup> Belavusau, "The Rise of Memory Laws in Poland"; Jarosław Wyrembak, "Charakter opinii Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w postępowaniach dekomunizacyjnych," *Przegląd Sejmowy* 5(166) (2021): 183–99, <https://doi.org/10.31268/PS.2021.65>.

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## Conclusion

Since the end of the World War II and the collapse of Communism there has been a significant interest in and increased importance of the politics of memory within the social sciences.<sup>309</sup> The politics of memory provides a unique lens in understanding politics that other lenses such as electoral politics cannot do on their own. This is the case with the Institution of National Remembrance (IPN) in Poland. The IPN is one of many memory institutions that were created after the collapse of Communism, but the IPN is a uniquely powerful actor in its respective mythscape. The IPN is uniquely powerful due in part to how large it is compared to other memory institutions, its judicial function that most other memory institutions do not have, and how much influence in that it has over Polish academia.<sup>310</sup> The IPN occupies a unique position in its centrality in the Polish mythscape, and has, or will have, influence or control over almost every aspect of mythmaking in Poland.

The IPN has changed over time, expanding, and becoming an increasingly centralized mythmaking institution. This expansion and centralization drastically increased with the 2007 and 2016 amendments to the AINR which added, reorganized, and expanded the IPN and its mission. The ability of the IPN directorship to function as a shield from external politics has also been weakened. A shift in focus has also taken place within the IPN over the recent past, with its judicial and lustration functions waning over time as those who worked with or for the PRL and potential Nazi or Communist criminals die. Instead, there has been an increase in focus on the research and educational activities of the IPN. These changes can be seen in the changes of the percentage of funding its various functions have seen (See Figure 6).

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<sup>309</sup> Verovšek, "Collective Memory, Politics, and the Influence of the Past"; Siddi, "The Ukraine Crisis and European Memory Politics of the Second World War."

<sup>310</sup> Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau ?"

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The expansion of the IPN has taken place under both mnemonic abnegators such as PO, and mnemonic warriors such as PiS. However, the IPN has seen its largest periods of expansion and centralization under the control of PiS. As mnemonic warriors, it is advantageous for PiS to use history, especially through the IPN, for their own political purposes.<sup>311</sup> While control over institutions like the IPN does not always lead to immediate political gains, the importance of memory institutions such as the IPN is their potential to use mythmaking as a tool shaping future myths and ideologies. It may be some time before it can be determined whether the investments of groups such as PiS have made in the IPN will pay off politically. Regardless, groups such as PiS continue to pour resources into institutions like the IPN

While the IPN is unique in its size and influence over a national mythscape, the lessons learned from studying the IPN can be applied to understanding the politics of memory with other institutions in their respective states. The fight for control of the IPN illustrates that mnemonic warriors have significantly more to gain from controlling a memory institute such as the IPN.<sup>312</sup> Another takeaway from studying the IPN through the lens of the politics of memory is that it is important not to neglect institutions such as the IPN and their importance and potential influence over a nation's politics. Groups such as PiS have poured a significant amount of resources into maintaining control of the IPN, which indicates that there is at least a perceived political benefit from maintaining control over it.

Examining the IPN and its importance in Polish politics generates a considerable number of new questions that still need to be answered. One important question is if the mythmaking being conducted at the IPN has had any significant impact on Polish perceptions and opinions, in other words, are the myths being produced at or through the IPN resonating with Poles? One

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<sup>311</sup> Kubik and Bernhard, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," 2014.

<sup>312</sup> Kubik and Bernhard, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," 2014.

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important limitation of this study was a language barrier. While technology exists which does an adequate job at translating documents from languages such as Polish and Russian into English, to truly understand the impact of the mythmaking taking place at the IPN there needs to be a thorough examination of Polish public opinion, the contents of material produced by the IPN, and the exact rhetoric used by those in charge of the IPN and the ruling parties. In understanding public perception, changes in the material produced by the IPN, and changes in rhetoric it is possible to examine how a myth such as the myth of heroes and victims resonates with a target collective, and the ability it has as a tool of political mobilization.

Another potential area for future research is the influence of institutions such as the IPN as a foreign policy tool. According to Tsimbal, Poland's, "historical policy issues are reflected in the key documents defining Poland's foreign policy: National security strategy and Foreign policy strategy."<sup>313</sup> The myth of heroes and victims has also been promoted on an international level to establish Poland's place among other European countries.<sup>314</sup> By virtue of the nature of the myth of heroes and victims some in Poland have been claiming some form of compensation based based on the myth of heroes and victims, and how much Poland has sacrificed over the years in the preservation of the West and Christian and democratic values.<sup>315</sup> Poland has also used the IPN to promote and protect its "good name" domestically and abroad.<sup>316</sup>

Another issue that should be studied is the amount of influence external sources of pressure have on a domestic mythscape such as in Poland. There has been a significant amount of criticism from outside of Poland toward the IPN.<sup>317</sup> In the case the "Holocaust law" which at

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<sup>313</sup> Tsimbal, "Belarus in the Historical Politics of Poland (2005–2020)," 25.

<sup>314</sup> Clarke and Duber, "Polish Cultural Diplomacy and Historical Memory."

<sup>315</sup> Tsimbal, "Belarus in the Historical Politics of Poland (2005–2020)."

<sup>316</sup> Hackmann, "Defending the 'Good Name' of the Polish Nation."

<sup>317</sup> Stola, "Poland's Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?"; Goddeeris, "History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions"; Behr, "Historiens Militants Ou Historiens de Bureau?"; Behr, "Historical Policy-Making in Post-1989 Poland."

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its simplest made it a crime assign blame to Poland for collaboration in the Holocaust, it was largely outside international pressure that led to the backtracking of some of the law.<sup>318</sup> A good amount of criticism of the IPN has come from the academic community outside of Poland,<sup>319</sup> and the effects of this outside criticism should be examined.

The way in which memory institutions interact with one another on a global scale is another question that deserves further research. One of the mandates of the IPN is to promote its research both domestically and abroad.<sup>320</sup> The IPN hosts conferences and events both domestically and abroad. Institutions such as the IPN have also formed international coalitions such as the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, which the IPN is a founding member, that is made up of at least 63 institutions whose stated main goal is to “increase public awareness about the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes, thus initiating discussion about universal values, promoting human dignity and human rights.”<sup>321</sup> The power these coalitions of memory institutions have over an international mythscape deserves further study.

Lastly, another area that needs further study is the effect the changing role of the media in the mythscape. Increasingly media and social media is growing in influence and importance in the mythscape.<sup>322</sup> The IPN has had an interesting relationship with the media over its lifetime, including individuals from the IPN using the media as a way to conduct lustration activities.<sup>323</sup> The media has also had an impact on the activities of the IPN, applying pressure to research

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<sup>318</sup> Clarke and Duber, “Polish Cultural Diplomacy and Historical Memory.”

<sup>319</sup> See Hackmann (2018) and Stola (2012)

<sup>320</sup> The Act on the Institute of National Remembrance Article 1 Point 6, Consolidated text as at 16 June 2016 (based on: Dz.U. Polish Journal of Laws of 2016 items 152, 178, 677, 749)  
[https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act\\_on\\_the\\_Institute\\_of\\_National\\_Remembrance](https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Act_on_the_Institute_of_National_Remembrance)

<sup>321</sup> Institute of National Remembrance, “International cooperation,” International Cooperation, March 14, 2021, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/about-the-institute/international-cooperat/7775,International-cooperation.html>.

<sup>322</sup> Soroka and Krawatzek, “Nationalism, Democracy, and Memory Laws”; Kącka, “Polityka historyczna: kreatorzy, narzędzia, mechanizmy działania – przykład Polski”; Bałdys and Piątek, “Memory Politicized. Polish Media and Politics of Memory - Case Studies”; Allison, “Residual History.”

<sup>323</sup> Goddeeris, “History Riding on the Waves of Government Coalitions.”



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certain salient issues such as Jedwabne.<sup>324</sup> One way the IPN has been able to maintain as much influence it does over the Polish mythscape is its focus on the media.<sup>325</sup> As the media and social media continue to grow in power as an actor on the mythscape, the way in which individuals and communities remember and forget may change, and the part of state institutions such as the IPN in the politics of memory may change as well.

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<sup>324</sup> Stola, “Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance: A Ministry of Memory?”

<sup>325</sup> Stola.

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