In the Free Market of Names: Polish Secret Service Files and Authoritarian Populism[1]

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the public life of a highly contested list of names, the "Wildstein List," leaked from the former secret service archives in early 2005 in Poland. Concentrating on the contentious debates on historical truth, transparency, victimhood ethics, and problems concerning public access to the archives, I examine the conjuncture of neoliberal transformations and the kind of lustration (verifying one's past links with the former secret service) proposed by nationalist-conservative groups. By highlighting the role of "scandal," I aim to show how the Wildstein List has generated a popular desire for lustration and "obligation" to know the truth to be revealed by the archives; how lustration has become an integral component of a politics of fear and suspicion propagated by the Polish nationalist-conservatives; and how the legitimacy crisis of post-89 liberal nation-state building project and class dispossession, the "dual crisis of labor and popular sovereignty" (Kalb 2009), is articulated to the "authoritarian populism" (Hall 1988) of nationalist-conservative groups that largely draw on Margaret Thatcher's (and Ronald Reagan's) neoliberal authoritarian policies (deregulation, privatization, "tough on crimes and corruption," moral policing). Finally, I reflect on the social consequences of this permeation of neoliberal ideology into conservative historical truth and justice projects – the social and legal effects of this populist authoritarian reconstruction of the socialist past.

Keywords: Secret Service Archives, Neoliberalism, Authoritarian Populism, Transparency, Scandal, Poland

I. The Scandal of Names

"Line for the file" (*Kolejka po teczki*, Gazeta Wyborcza, 4/2/2005), "The Institute of National Remembrance under siege" (*IPN w stanie oblężenia*, Rzeczpospolita, 4/2/2005) "Lustration Tsunami" (*Lustracyjne Tsunami*, Gazeta Wyborcza, 7/2/2005), these were some of the news headlines that referred to the popular uproar and chaos following the publication of a list of 240,000 names leaked from the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance of Poland (IPN) in early 2005. Unlike its initial public perception, the list was not simply an "agent list" of the former secret service (UB/SB). It was much more ambiguous and sweeping in how it organized the names. The list lumped together indiscriminately in alphabetical order the names of different categories of people registered by the secret service: former UB/SB employees, "secret collaborators" (*tajny współpracownik*), and "candidates" (*kandidat*) for collaboration--people whom the secret service aimed to recruit, many of whom had been targets of covert operations or surveillance. It was not possible to determine from the list whether the recruitment of these candidates was ever realized, or if these candidates actually ended up cooperating. It was also not possible to know what those "collaborators" precisely had done. Besides, there were

those registered by the secret service under one category or another without their knowledge. Certainly, the list did not address any of these "complications." It was mainly a reproduction of the lists prepared by the secret service for its *own* purposes. Most of the names were not verified with the IPN archives before their public exposure. And some turned out to be not even verifiable, because the archival institution had no documents concerning them.

All the names met each other on the flat screen of a few web-sites, where the list made its public debut. Later it descended into the blackmarket in dubious CDs for those who did not have internet access at home. A great object of speculation and suspicion, the list was reproduced and modified by different web-sites. It was not clear from the list who was who, if the name "Jan Kowalski" refers to one Jan Kowalski but not another, or why one's name was there. It was left to the concerned person to find out about these issues. Only a few days after the media news about the list, the IPN received more than 1,000 inquiries, and in the following two weeks 10,000. The bombardment of names subjected thousands of people to the jurisdiction of the IPN and lustration (vetting public employees against the former secret service archives, or more colloquially, verifying anyone's links with the former secret service). With a sudden burst, the scandal created a community of files, self-righteous detectives, lustrators, and self-lustrators, who would otherwise not be subjected to such examination. *One had to know what was in the IPN, because until proven innocent, anyone who had their name on the list was a suspect.*

This notorious list is today known as the "Wildstein List" (*lista Wildsteina*) named after the influential anti-communist journalist, Bronisław Wildstein. Wildstein did not bear any legal responsibility for the injuries the list caused or for walking out from the IPN archives with the list in his possession. On the contrary, his so-called sacrificial act elicited support from different kinds of nationalist-conservative groups in Poland. Nor did Wildstein ever have to express publicly any regret for the incident. Instead, he often argued that the victim of "communist crimes" has every right to know "who is who" and democracy requires, first and foremost, transparency and the moral cleansing of the new nation from corrupt former communists and their supporters. "The nation has the right to know about itself" (*naród ma prawo do prawdy o sobie*) and "the entire property of the IPN belonged to the nation" (*co jest własnościa IPN należy do narodu*), as Wildstein often remarked (Gazeta Wyborcza, 31/1/2005).

In this article, I want to explore what the public life of this scandalous list reveals about the intersection of neoliberal transformations and the de-communization or lustration projects driven by populist conservative forces in Poland.[2] Specifically, I focus on the way in which the liberal or neoliberal discourse of transparency is employed by these conservative lustration projects. Here, I am concerned less with what is often noted as the paradoxical production of suspicion by transparency projects as with how that suspicion is harnessed by conservative forces to articulate popular anxieties and fears to their ideological framework in their political struggle for hegemony. At the outset, I want to emphasize the following assumptions of this article concerning transparency. First, unlike most transitional justice or memory research on lustration, I do not assume a *natural* instinct or desire to know *the* truth (see Teitel 2000: 149-190). Nor do I assume that the truth simply sits *there* in the archive waiting to be exposed or

collected. Instead, what I want to understand is the political mechanisms or tactics that aim to create a certain social desire for the truth that is to be revealed by the former secret service files, and how a particular type of truth procedure is authorized as *the* historical truth, at the expense of others. In this regard, I underline the importance of "scandal" in producing publicity for lustration and the files, the publicity that is motivated by popular suspicion and fear, and the (imposed) obligation to know. This production of fear and moral panic, I suggest, is integral to the operation of in Stuart Hall's term, "authoritarian populism" (1988) that marks conservative-nationalist lustration projects.

I consider "scandal" as a point of convergence for a variety of political, economic, and moral forces that crystallize or interrogate the existing social norms through disruption. In this article, I investigate what the Wildstein List scandal illuminates about the tensions and antagonisms regarding the broader field of post-89 media and law, and the way notions like transparency, victimhood, and democracy are publicly contested. This brings me to my second assumption about transparency. As is the case with any elements in ideological discourse, transparency does not function in isolation, because its meaning or force depends on the way it articulates with other elements (Volosinov quoted in Hall 1988: 9). In this sense, I seek to consider transparency within its larger political-economic and normative framework. Studies of transitional justice and memory tend to dissect it from other "seemingly" unrelated fields of discourse and practice, especially political economy. This dissection, in turn, obscures the different ways in which the discourse of transparency is localized and put into effect by different political vocabularies and programs across the globe. In this regard, I want to know how Wildstein and other conservatives' neoliberal ideas concerning the state and market underpin their understanding of historical truth and justice. To this end, I will examine the particular ways in which their lustration projects embrace the neoliberal rhetoric of freedom and transparency as the model of truth and justice.

In this article, I do not intend to present a history of neoliberalism in Poland. As is often noted, neoliberalism as an ideology or a set of governmental policies (promoted by the Washington Consensus) targeting capitalist state transformation and deregulation of economy (Wacquant 2009) has exerted a hegemonic force in post-89 Polish politics.[3] It has been embraced by all major political parties, whether they self-identify as conservative, liberal, or social democrat (Kowalik 2011; Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2009). Here I am mainly concerned with the nationalist-conservative groups that build on or uphold neoliberalism. What I attempt to do is to identify some provisional links between conservative-neoliberalism and lustration, which are often overlooked by research on lustration or rightwing populism. These links may be sought in certain Polish conservatives like Wildstein's invocation of the authoritarian neoliberal policies of Margaret Thatcher (and Ronald Reagan) such as "tough on corruption and crime," moral policing, and privatization in order to articulate the popular discontent about post-89 transformations. To make sense of the popular appeal of this conservative-neoliberalism, I suggest that Hall's notion of "authoritarian populism," which he coined for "Thatcherism" is particularly helpful. It is through this notion that Hall sought to capture the tensions and

contradictions involving Thatcher's linking together of diverse themes and policies: the disciplinary exercise of state power armed with tough law and order measures and conservative themes of family, nation, "crisis of authority," and moral degeneration is aligned with the neoliberal ideas of the free market and competitive individualism. The articulation of popular discontent into the political program of conservative-neoliberalism is not a story of "duped" masses or "false consciousness," but has *real* social and material basis and is marked by *real* contradictions. In fact, I suggest that the value of the concept of authoritarian populism for a study of conservative-neoliberalism or rightwing populism in Eastern Europe lies precisely in the extent to which it problematizes this basis and contradictions.

In what follows I begin with an overview of the subject position Bronisław Wildstein fashions for himself in post-89 Poland. Specifically, I focus on the connection between his embrace of neoliberal ideology and his advocacy for radical lustration projects or "historical politics" (*polityka historyczna*). I will then reconstruct the political environment in which the Wildstein List came into being, and investigate its social consequences and legal remedies. I will finish with tentative reflections on the political strategies underlying the Wildstein List scandal, and what these strategies reveal about the authoritarian populism of the Polish conservative-neoliberalism, as well as the limitations of certain understandings of truth, justice, and transparency for a democratic politics worthy of the name.

II. Wildstein's Historical Politics: A Neoliberal Lustration?

Bronisław Wildstein's political biography follows the line of many other dissidents, who came of age in the 1970s when Poland "opened" its economy to the capitalist West to collect loans for development and boost consumption The second half of the 1970s, however, was marked by devastating economic crisis, food shortages, a wave of brutally suppressed worker strikes, and a growing unrest at educational institutions. At this time, Wildstein started getting involved in oppositional student groups and later left the country for Paris in the early 1980s while Poland was under the martial law and ruled by the militarized party-state. In Paris, he continued his oppositional activity partly by cooperating with the Radio Free Euope. When he returned to Poland, he was not quite in the position of shaping the course of the transformations. He was not one of leading opposition activists or elites of theSolidarity (*Solidarność*) movement, who sat down in 1989 to cut the "Round-Table agreements" with the leadership of the Polish United Worker's Party. Many former dissidents later held government positions, joining the ranks of the new liberal or neoliberal establishment and abandoning the millions of working people to the mercy of the "shock therapy" reforms, the people who not long before constituted the social base of Solidarity (Kowalik 2011; Modzelewski 1993). The new government endorsed a policy of the "thick line" between the socialist past and the liberal future and gave priority to the drastic structural adjustment reforms for economic development. As I argued elsewhere (2011), it was this restructuring of economy and privatization of the state that was supposed to bury the "dark totalitarian past."

Wildstein has heatedly opposed this vision, fashioning his public identity as an angry victim of communism and a marginalized former oppositionist of the new (post-89) Third Republic. Like other conservatives, he has accused many former dissidents of national betrayal. He often invokes de-communization to address the legitimacy crisis of the liberal nation-state building project and to account for the problems of social inequality and dispossession and the exclusive social-political networks that have been running the state and market. In his numerous articles, he called for the following program: deregulation of the market, decentralization and downsizing of the state, public budget cuts, and tax cuts. All of these measures align with a certain understanding of a "strong," "minimalistic,"and "efficient" state that is also fearsome with its elaborate policing and anti-corruption measures. Walking in the footsteps of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, he suggested that once the iron fisted legal mechanisms are installed, once the heavy corrupt socialist state is destroyed and replaced by a *thin* low-cost one, once the civil servants are depoliticized and made subject to screening of their loyalties via lustration, once the degenerated old people are replaced by a new generation of civil servants, who have a "fresh" view on how to run the state and economy, the citizens will then be able to realize their *natural* resources and capacities. (2008: 58-70; 11/01/2005) De-communization was necessary to build the *real* capitalism, the real competitive free market salvaged from the last remains of the socialist state and trade unions, the associations Poland inherited from the past (2005).

The Wildstein List exploded like dynamite in the midst of calls for radical lustration or de-communization and moral condemnation of the Third Republic by the conservatives. After scandalous corruption affairs (namely Rywin and Orlen affairs) shook the liberal "post-communist" government by exposing its illicit ties with the private sector, conservatives seized the opportunity to trumpet their criticism of the Third Republic, which they identified with moral decay, postmodern moral relativisim, a weak state, oligarchy, and corruption. De-communization was to initiate a clean break with the past and expiate the "demoralized public" from the "sins" of the Third Republic (Wildstein 2008: 59-63). For example, the Catholic nationalist party, "The League of Polish Families," lobbied for the need to urgently prepare a list, which would publicly expose the names of all former secret service employees and agents. A new clean, strong, Christian Fourth Republic was on the near horizon.

The eve of the Wildstein List scandal was marked by this radicalization of nationalist-conservatives and contentions about the IPN's management of the secret service files, accusations of collaboration, and revelations of sensational information from the IPN archives. According to the law on the IPN (1998), only those who were certified as victims by the IPN were allowed access to their personal files and could ask for the decipherment of the names of the UB/SB officers and collaborators involved in their cases. It was left entirely to the victims to decide what they wanted to do with that information. However, a person they might accuse of collaboration did not have the right to access the IPN archives. Nor could the accused initiate a "self-lustration" (*autolustracja*) proceeding to clear their name unless they occupied a public office. Critiques of the law often pointed to the violation of the constitutional principle of the

right to self-defense and the absence of any public institution, which assumed responsibility for the injuries caused by the "private denunciations" of the certified victims.

Wildstein unwaveringly supported the existing IPN law to respond to the criticisms. He argued that knowing the names of those who reported to the UB/SB and revealing those names satisfied the basic feelings of justice (2008: 71-81; 14/01/2005). Moreover, this was a citizenship right: every citizen has the right to know not only one's own past, but also those who represent or govern them. This was necessary, he said, for transparency and accountability fundamental to democracy. It was only after the full exposition of "who is who" that people could *freely* decide and make their *own* individual judgments whether they still wanted to be in touch with or vote for that person. Wildstein also argued for the *professionalization* of verification of archival material, turning the entire issue into one of technical expertise. The unreliable court system must be removed from lustration and public exposition of names. Unlike the professional archivists and historians of the IPN, the legal personnel (e.g., judges, lawyers) did not know how to read the IPN documents. The archival institution without any outside interference should be able to compile a catalogue of names and then publish it on its web-site, so that the public could see and make their own judgments. If anyone wanted to object IPN's verification, he or she could then apply to the court.

It is important to underline that to a large degree, this vision of historical justice and truth advocated by Wildstein and other conservative-neoliberals were realized with the scandal of the Wildstein List. As I will discuss below, the courts were bypassed and people gathered by the doors of the archival institution to check their names against the files. However, it could hardly be said that those who saw the names were ever *free* to make their choices or judgments in the highly agitated environment produced by the media and political groups. Who were those (already) *free* subjects waiting for the truth to reveal itself before their eyes? What was *there* in the list to know and make a decision about? One can draw out parallels between this vision of historical justice and truth and the neoliberal political economic program advocated by Wildstein that I discussed earlier. Professionalization of knowledge, the sanctity of technical expertise, market choice and entrepreneurial activity as the paradigm of freedom and democratic empowerment, are often noted features of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005). There is also remarkable correspondance or overlap with regards to Wildstein's allusions to something like natural capacity or human nature. Consider his *naturalized* assumptions about transparency and private judgment of citizens ("natural feelings of justice," "natural capacities for making judgments") and his justification of neoliberal economy by invoking the *natural* resources and capacities of free entrepreneurs and the self-regulating market.[4] Could we say that the subject of truth and justice envisoned by this vision is the same (ideal) subject of neoliberal economy? Then, what are the social consequences of the permeation of free market ideology into this vision of historical justice and truth? I turn to these questions below.

III. The Wildstein List and Authoritarian Populism

While many researchers underline the importance of the symbol of "free market" ideology and its intersection with populism and morality (e.g., Dunn 2004; Humphrey 2002; Kalb 2009; Ost 2005; Verdery 1996), the links between free market capitalism and lustration remain largely unexplored. To a large extent, my conversations with my long time interlocutor, Jan, whom I met during the initial stages of my fieldwork in Poland, have made me realize those links. If I did not meet this working man in his early forties, who attuned my senses to the daily disillusionment of people like him with the "post-communist order" (*układ*), perhaps, it would have been easier to overlook the connection between Wildstein's support for neoliberal policies and his vision of lustration. It would have been tempting to dismiss the rationality that produces the effect of unity between his ideas about the state and free market and lustration. I learned much from the conversations and disagreements I had with him, who introduced me to Wildstein's arguments long before I knew they were Wildstein's. Our conversations helped me place these arguments in a larger context and see how they function with Jan's particular life trajectory. I noticed how popular Wildstein's views of lustration and celebration of the free market might be among people who feel alienated and marginalized by the neoliberal transformations of 1990s. It was as though the transformations did not neoliberalize enough and Poland failed to build its real capitalism.

With Jan, I often found myself grappling with what I saw as a contradiction: on the one hand, as a low paid construction worker in a theater company, chronically worried about his job and wage over the last decade, Jan heatedly supported lustration by denouncing any anti-capitalist or Left ideology and, on the other, he adamantly embraced conservative laissez-faire capitalism as the true model of morality and justice. The competitive market decided what was good, he often remarked. While it rewarded hard work, the market eliminated the lazy, who were spoiled by the former state with full employment policies and social security. It was the free market principles that best reflected the human nature. Even though he knew very well that he always had been on the losing side of neoliberalization, Jan attributed this to the communist corruption of capitalism from within and the operation of foreign capital from without. In this respect, lustration was going to redistribute wealth by cleansing the new Republic of corrupt people and help build a healthy national capitalism. It was necessary to expose the names of former communist agents and let people decide what to do with them.

Jan was certainly not alone in holding these views. Nor was Wildstein, who popularized them via different media. It is hard to ignore that the market has become a popular yardstick to measure value or judge. The power of the symbol of a (free) "market" or "market populism" has been widely noted by studies of postsocialist Poland and Eastern Europe (Kalb 2009; Halmai and Kalb 2011; Ost 2005). The market is considered both a sphere of economic activity and a moral domain where value is produced and action is evaluated. The "monetarist and moralist language" often "overlap" in the neoliberal expert discourse, as Kalb observed (2009: 294).[5] Recent studies of the "illiberal" or "neo-nationalist" Polish working class and political elite have contributed

greatly to our understanding of the dynamics of popular support for lustration and the growing influence of populist right wing parties. These studies rightly associated lustration with neo-nationalist or conservative reaction of the dispossessed to the effects produced by neoliberal transformations. While David Ost (2005) emphasized the failure of liberal political elite or post-Solidarity trade unions to articulate the popular anger in the language of class, Don Kalb (2009) highlighted the way the working people sought to make sense of their experience of class dispossession by drawing on the historical nationalist language available to them.

Expanding on these studies, I attempt to detail the way in which the "popular consent" for nationalist conservative-neoliberalism was constructed through organizing anger and fear by accusations of collaboration and rightwing lustration politics. In this regard, Stuart Hall's notion of "authoritarian populism" is particularly useful to highlight the main features of Polish conservative-neoliberalism. This is not because the latter is a replicate of "Thatcherism" or its representatives simply import "Thatcherite" strategies; however, offering a point of comparison, what Hall describes as "Thatcherism" enables us to better comprehend the discursive elements and strategies that comprise Polish conservative-neoliberalism. Like Polish conservative-neoliberalism, it presents itself on the side of the "little man against the big battalions" (small versus big capitalists). While fostering disciplinary state power, it presents itself as anti-corporatist and anti-statist (1988:152). Moreover, Thatcherism frames the general ideological and economic crisis as moral degeneration or "crisis of authority" ("the social order on the brink of collapse, its enemies proliferating within and without"). Itemphasizes crime and social delinquency and forges "anti-moral pollution," anti-abortion, and "rising crime rate" lobbies. It transforms the real material and social experience of discontent, anxiety, and uncertainty of ordinary people into a "'cry for discipline' from below, which favors the imposition of a regime of moral authoritarianism in the name of the people." Finally, Thatcherism draws on "popular moralities" nested on the fear of crime, "unchanging character of human nature," and retributive justice (1988:137-142). The force of Thatcherism, Hall notes building on Antonio Gramsci's work, depends so much on its ability to transform the common sense and harness the popular discontent to its own ideology.

What does this insight suggest about Polish conservative-neoliberalism and their lustration politics? I think that it helps highlight the important point that unlike how it is often assumed, neither support for lustration nor for conservative-neoliberalism belongs to the Polish working class. Lustration does *not* simply reflect working class interests. Nor is it an organic or genetic expression of class dispossession. Lustration participates in redefining what constitutes as class interest and identity and restructuring the state through vetting and controlling public personnel. Likewise, lustration does not only reflect or transform the already existing suspicion or fear, but partly it generates and disseminates them. Striving to become popular morality, it draws on and recasts the historical, popular repertoire of anti-communist nationalism. It invokes a Christly victimhood, according to which the Polish nation appears to be sacrificed at different historical moments as the "Christ of nations," defending Christian Europe against the "barbaric" influences or attacks from the East (the Russian and Ottoman Empires) (Mach 1997). This

popular victimhood based on national sacrifice then justifies the inflictment of suffering on those who become subject to lustration via different means, as the case of the Wildstein List suggests.

The authoritarian populism of the conservative-neoliberal lustration project vividly manifested itself in the social effects the Wildstein List produced. These were largely based on the production and dissemination of fear, suspicion, and guilt. After the eruption of the scandal, some IPN historians sought to reassure the public that the list could not cause any harm to innocent people. The well-known historian, Antoni Dudek said in an interview: "if your name appears in the list. Why worry? There may be other people with the same name – so really, what makes you worry? Do you have anything to hide? An honest and sincere person would not be worried." (Gazeta Wyborcza, 4/2/2005) Even worrying could be a sign of guilt. Nevertheless, some people appeared quite worried. Just to give one example: Jadwiga Staniszkis, a famous sociologist and a well-known supporter of conservative de-communization politics, appeared notably distressed when she found her name on the list. However, the IPN authorities familiar with her files rapidly clarified that she was, in fact, a victim, not a secret informer. The signature number of her file, which suggested that she might have been a secret informer, was simply wrong. In a TV program, Staniszkis said the following about her experience:

> It was the most difficult time of my life. I am not a depressed person in general, but I really had something tragic in mind [after learning about my name on the list]. It was shocking, but now I am relieved…. If that list was published somewhere and I had to face it, I would have been in a hopeless situation. It would have crossed out my entire life! In that list it is not clear who is who, that is why what Mr. Kieres [the head of the IPN at the time] said does not calm me: there are also victims of the UB/SB on the list. There is no way to clear oneself….The majority of the people in the list do not have a chance to verify their names, like I had, to see why their names are on the list (Gazeta Wyborcza, 31/1/2005).[6]

Yet, one had to take every available chances to verify one's names. Applying to the IPN archives was not always enough to clear oneself. Working under a tight schedule and a heavy load of inquiries, the archival institution categorized the applicants under two broad categories: victims and non-victims. Victims were those who were spied on or targeted by the secret service and only they were allowed access to the documents. The rest of the applicants were called non-victim, the status which did not qualify access and drew much suspicion (if you were not a victim, who were you then?). The non-victims included also those who did not have files. However, it is well known that one's relation to the UB/SB could be quite dynamic and contingent.[7] Besides the significant portion of the files were destroyed during the regime change in the early 1990s, making it impossible in some cases to ascertain the exact nature of one's links with the UB/SB. Problems for deceased persons, whose names appeared on the list was no less difficult. They neither had the possibility to speak for themselves nor could their relatives check their names with the IPN. The law on the IPN (1998) did not recognize their close kin as

"interested parties," with the right to apply to see the concerned documents. The names of the dead could not be claimed or identified with any certainty in the world of the living. For the living, too, there were not sufficient legal remedies for the injury caused by the list, or effective legal means to dispute the archival institution's decision about one's application.[8] The Helsinki Human Rights Foundation lawyers closely engaged in some of the legal cases, which after spending long years in the dizzy traffic of legal procedures have ended up at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The human rights lawyers underlined that according to the then existing Polish law, it was not possible for the bearer of the name to bring a civil lawsuit, for instance, for violation of personal rights such as reputation or public slander regarding collaboration with the UB/SB. There were two fundamental legal problems.[9] First, there was nothing to be personally offended by. The list was not considered legally a public slander or a criminal act, because it was not possible to identify any concrete living or dead person solely by looking at the names on the list. Besides, the very lumping together of all categories of people created the ambiguity that absolved the author of the list from any concrete accusations. It was not possible to prove any infliction of injury. The list did not imply anything. It did not "judge," but simply exposed some 240,000 names and left the burden of proof to others who saw the list. Furthermore, the anonymity of cyberspace ensured impunity for the list's author. Published on the internet, the Wildstein List posed nobody as its culpable author. The prosecutor never managed to establish the circumstances in which the list was obtained. Wildstein never had to disclose how he walked out from the archive with the list in his possession; he invoked his right to keep confidential his information source as a journalist.

IV. Conclusions

The social consequences of the Wildstein List have been pervasive and long standing. The scandal has created inconclusive suspicions and irresolvable ambiguities which many concerned citizens (often without access to the documents) have had to bear in solitude. One was, as it were, thrown into an expansive space of indefinite waiting, indirect defacement, and indistinctive judgment, which was not fully answerable by any of the already existing legal procedures. A great disparity emerged between the temporality of the scandal and its instutional handling. It has become crystal clear that the slow legal proceedings were of no match to the sudden flash of the scandal. If it is true that Wildstein aimed to accelerate lustration by pure exposition of names and removal of all complex and contingent legal procedures, he might have succeeded, at least in the short run. The temporality of the scandal has fit well to the general ethos of postsocialist "hit-and-run" politics marked by ephemeral sensational revelations from the IPN archives.

One of the chief "achievements" of the scandal was the growing publicity for the IPN files and the increasing subjection of people to the archival institution's evaluation of their pasts. Lustration practices expanded horziontally and involuntarily. The fact that the list was not an agent list created even more anxiety. Many people who otherwise were not legally required to

undergo lustration examination had to fill out an application form. A community of files and certified victims and non-victims emerged. Through various forms of intimidation, fear, and uncertainty, the scandal cultivated a popular desire or urge to know one's UB/SB documents and lustrate not only oneself but also others. It was the cultivation of a desire to know from below, which then demanded the imposition of order and verification from above. It is this relationship between the authoritarian political power and its populist grounding in society that gave the thrust of authoritarian populism by spreading fear and paranoia.

That is why it is never enough to say, as Wildstein and other journalists and historians have often said, that all we need to do is to expose the truth, that is, the names of those positively affiliated with the former security services, and justice will follow. Drawing on the naturalist language of neoliberal ideology, conservative-noliberals maintain that: "the citizens are free to judge the truth and do whatever they want to do with it." It is important to underline that this "free judging of the truth" does not involve any popular participation in the production of truth or historical knowledge. That is done by the "initiated" experts of the archives, the specialized IPN archivists, historians, and journalists who possess the secret, technical knowledge of the files. The ordinary citizen was there, only to participate in the festivity of destruction with that truth as an *outraged spectator* or a *passive consumer* of sensational news. It is the model of a citizen, who is only "informed" but never an active participant in the means of production of knowledge of the past. Likewise, the frequently invoked right to know and transparency are ridden with problems on a closer analysis. In one memorable conversation, the historian Paweł Machcewicz underlined that it was all a matter of privileging one of the following democratic rights over another: whether one chooses to privilege the right to start a new life (for those affiliated with the UB/SB), or transparency, that is, the right to know (Gazeta Wyborcza, 4-5/2/2005). But what is it exactly that one has the right to know? What does knowing consist of? The Ombudsman, Andrzej Zoll, articulated well the fundamental problem with that discourse of transparency: it was not simply the right to know just about anything, but the right to know, first and foremost, "substantial information" (*rzetelna informacja*). The quality of knowledge produced was no less important than the abstractly conceived right to know. What then is the kind of knowledge produced by the registry lists? What is the kind of truth, or better, truth procedure needed for a truly democratic politics?

Slavoj Žižek (2000) and Don Kalb (2011) warned us against the futility of *demonizing* rightwing populism or inducing fear of their so-called irrational or primitive motives, which liberal parties often do especially on the eve of elections to collect votes. In Poland, liberal groups often use the same strategy against what is represented by Bronisław Wildstein's conservative-neoliberal position or the list that bears his name. Instead, I suggest that we would gather more insight by focusing on the dynamic political and socioeconomic terrain shaped and occupied by the conservative-neoliberals like Wildstein. It is more rewarding to examine the strategies through which these groups invoke the sovereignty of the people to articulate an "antagonistic relationship with the established order" and divide society via a symbolic construction as "the people" vs. "its other" (the multitude of powerless versus the few powerful),

like in the case of almost all populist movements (Panizza 2005: 3-5; Laclau 2005). Stuart Hall's term "authoritarian populism" may help us understand the kind of contradictions underpinning the contemporary populist conservative formation in Poland and perhaps, elsewhere in the post-Soviet world. How does the peculiar combination of "strong state" and "free market" policies work? How is the common sense or popular consent for this combination of conservative auhoritarianism and free market capitalism produced in society? How do centers of hegemony shift across time and space? Such populism must not be dismissed as "fake" or a matter of duping the people. It has a *rational* and *material* base. It addresses real problems, experiences, and contradictions, and seeks to articulate them through its political language. Without working through these contradictions and experiences, without grasping the conditions of social inequality and the "dual crisis of labor and popular sovereignty" (Kalb 2009), there will be no end to other Wildstein Lists, a politics of fear and suspicion, and instrumentalization of the former secret service files.

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[1]All translations from Polish are mine unless otherwise noted. This article is an extended version of the conference paper presented at 2013 SOYUZ Symposium on "Authoritarianism and Beyond?" It has benefited from conversations with Neil Agarwal, Ahilan Kadirgamar, Mark Drury, Preeti Sampat, Fabio Mattioli, Ajkuna Hoppe, Katherine Verdery, and Yunus Dogan Telliel. The material presented draws on on my fieldwork supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the U.S. National Science Foundation (award no 1022656).

[2] These groups include the far right, "The League of Polish Families" (*Liga Polskich Rodziń*), center-right "Law and Justice" (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) political parties, and what I call, "conservative-neoliberals," the conservatives, who have been pushing for neoliberal economic policies such as, the popular weekly *Wprost*. The political group of Jan Rokita and journalists like Piotr Semka may also be counted among conservative-neoliberals. See the volume edited by Piotr Żuk (2006) for an analysis of neoliberal Polish media.

[3] See Jakub Majmurek (2009)'s article for an insightful discussion of Polish neoliberalism, which he notes, shares many features with its Western European and Anglosaxon variant (e.g., its discrediting of the welfare state, consideration of the free market as the fundamental rationality for rule of law democracy, consideration of entrepreneurial freedom as the paradigm of freedom in general, reduction of politics to economic policy making and self-referential expert discourse etc.). In Poland, neoliberalism also functions as the thorough condemnation of all that is associated with the socialist past (including particular state institutions) and a "return to Europe" or "normality" from "aberrant" state socialism. As such, like in other former East Bloc countries, it is inscribed to the anxieties about "catching up" with the advanced capitalism of the West. In this regard, see also Gil Eyal, Iván Szelényi, and Eleanor Townsley (2000) and Georgi M. Derlugian (2005) for an analysis on the hegemonic influence of neoliberalism on the intellectual formation of the political elite in former East Bloc countries and in the post-Soviet world.

[4] Certainly, ideologies tend to rely on some notion of nature in order to seem true, authentic, and self-evident. They want to be felt as natural as the air people breathe. In this case, however, I

want to draw attention to the correspondence between the way Wildstein invokes the idea of nature in his conservative-neoliberal vision and in his historical justice vision.

[5] Kalb suggested that the "shock therapy advocate and Polish finance minister Leszek Balcerowicz saw his task [of privatization and marketization] in thoroughly moralist terms…Under socialism, he observed, "conscience was crowded out" – note the interesting overlap of monetarist and moralist language. Markets, Balcerowicz as well as many other workers believed, served to "lock in conscience" by rewarding the conscientious." (2009: 294)

[6] Interestingly, shortly after this TV appearance, Staniszkis felt the need to declare publicly her unchanged loyalty to the de-communization project and even underscore that the publication of the Wildstein List was entirely justified.

[7] One could have been classified both as a "victim" and "collaborator" at different times like in the case of Lech Wałęsa, the well-known leader of the Solidarity movement.

[8] I have gathered the information about legal problems or procedures from my conversations with the Warsaw based Helsinki Human Rights Foundation lawyers throughout 2010.

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