

well as the others mentioned in my review, I found the book disappointing. But, as Surovell suggests, interested readers should examine the book and judge for themselves.

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To the Editor:

I would like to respond to the criticism directed at me by Jan Tomasz Gross in his essay on his book, *Neighbors* (*Slavic Review*, vol. 61, no. 3). Among other things, he reproached me for the following: "Musiał is treating major historical controversies in transparent bad faith. Ostensibly engaging with the substance of historical interpretation, he actually diverts his reader's attention to the historiographical marginalia, which he often distorts, the better to draw attention away from the substantive scholarly and moral issues, to which he has no contribution to offer" (483–84). These are serious charges, but untrue.

Gross's criticism refers to the essay I published in the autumn 2001 issue of *Dzieje Najnowsze*, "Tezy dotyczące pogromu w Jedwabnem." There, I focused in particular on how Gross treated historical sources in his study of the murders at Jedwabne, pointing out countless examples when Gross blatantly ignored the basic rules of scholarly research. In conclusion, I stated: "Jan T. Gross's *Neighbors* contains numerous contradictions, erroneous interpretations, unhistorical speculations, and false statements. Furthermore, his publication levels serious allegations against specific individuals. As it turns out, his charges are based on unconfirmed sources, false accusations, and 'proof' constructed ad hoc by the author himself. The latter he later explains away as 'oversights.' . . . The shortcomings of this book disqualify both its intrinsic value and Gross's 'affirmative' approach to the sources" (278–79).

Scholarly treatment of historical sources is by no means "historiographical marginalia" (= "oversights") as Gross claims, but instead represents the foundation of historical scholarship. Gross repeatedly claimed that *Neighbors* was based on scholarly research. He should therefore be willing to have the book measured according to scholarly standards. Those standards are universal.

Gross claims that I have "no contribution to offer" to the "substantive scholarly and moral issues." In fact, the main focus of my scholarly work for the past years has been the fate of the Jewish population in Poland during World War II. My Ph.D. dissertation was on the persecution of Jews in occupied Poland ("Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung im Generalgouvernement," 1999), and I published an essay two years ago in *Yad Vashem Studies*: "The Origins of Operation 'Reinhard': The Decision-Making Process for the Mass Murder of the Jews in the Generalgouvernement." In addition, my "*Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschossen*": *Die Brutalisierung des deutsch-sowjetischen Krieges im Sommer 1941* (2000) takes up the anti-Jewish pogroms in eastern Poland in the summer of 1941. In addition, I have written countless essays, newspaper articles, and lectures on this exact topic. At the moment, I am organizing an international conference dealing with the annihilation of Jews in occupied Poland. In all my works, I explicitly study the topic of Jewish-Polish relations during the German and Soviet occupations of Poland.

I categorically deny Gross's insinuation that I use "sarcasm" when writing about the mass murder of Jews in Jedwabne. Gross seems to wish to depict me as a person possibly amused by the tragic fate of these individuals. His is a libelous charge, a rhetorical device seemingly calculated to permit him to evade my scholarly criticism of his professionally unacceptable manner of dealing with historical sources. My aforementioned publications belie this charge of sarcasm.

One might draw the conclusion that Gross does not feel comfortable on scholarly grounds, as far as Jedwabne is concerned, for he introduced highly inappropriate metaphysical elements into the debate on the mass murder of the Jews in Jedwabne. Let us look at two examples. When queried by a journalist about the reasons for the massacre in Jedwabne, Gross responded: "The only explanation is as follows: the devil descended on earth. It does happen from time to time. Unless you have a different answer" ("Diabeł zstąpił do Jedwabnego," *Kontakty*, 25 February 2001). Gross also claims to have experienced "an epiphany" that enabled him to realize that the key, but in fact questionable, document

in his portrayal should be taken literally (See "Jan Gross on Poland's Shame," *New Yorker*, 12 March 2001). He did that without, however, first doing the necessary examination, a *Quellenkritik*, of his sources. This metaphysical methodology is completely alien to historical science.

It was primarily the search for historical truth that led me to participate in the debate on Jedwabne. Similar factors prompted me to enter the discussion on the first *Wehrmacht* exhibition in 1999. The manipulations, misrepresentations, and the almost criminal manner of dealing with historical sources undertaken by the German authors aroused my criticism of that exhibition ("Bilder einer Ausstellung: Kritische Anmerkungen zur Wanderausstellung Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944," *Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte* 47 [1999]: 653–91). I never questioned the reality of the *Wehrmacht's* crimes, although some of my critics have attributed that position to me. Likewise, I have never doubted that the Jewish inhabitants of Jedwabne were brutally murdered on 10 July 1941, nor that Poles were involved in those events.

In the same issue of *Slavic Review*, Norman M. Naimark also criticized me in his article "The Nazis and 'The East': Jedwabne's Circle of Hell." According to Naimark, "Bogdan Musiał's bloated claims about extensive Jewish participation in Soviet crimes and justifiable Polish resentment against Jewish perpetrators beg the question" (479). I supposedly made these "bloated claims" in my book "*Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschliessen.*" This serious charge also has no substance. I have never said anything the least bit similar, either in that book or in any of my other publications.

As proof of his assertion, Naimark cited pages 57–78. There I attempted to show how calamitous the Soviet occupation policy in eastern Poland in the years 1939–1941 had been for ethnic relations. I stated: "The Jewish population found itself in a particularly difficult situation. On the one hand, its elites were persecuted. Many Jewish refugees from central and western Poland were deported to Siberia. On the other hand, the Soviet system created for other Jews new possibilities and new prospects. For many, especially the youth, Soviet rule meant social advancement. The active pursuit of these opportunities set them on a collision course with other ethnic groups, for whom Soviet rule had become synonymous with the social advancement of the Jews. In this fashion, anti-Jewish sentiments gained a new dimension during the Soviet occupation. The body of traditional prejudices, economic conflicts, and socio-religious differences was reinforced by a new image of Jews profiting from Sovietization and collaborating with the Soviet enemy."

In addition, I pointed out on pages 270–82 that "it would be unhistorical to conclude that the Jews were either responsible or co-responsible for the Soviet terror in eastern Poland, since many Jews were victims of the very same terror. The responsibility for the deportations lies squarely with the Soviet regime, which employed the help of local collaborators, including those of Jewish origin, to carry out this deed. However, the association, conditioned by local circumstances, of the entire Soviet terror with both the Soviets and their actual, and supposed, Jewish accomplices bore truly tragic consequences for future relations between the Jewish and non-Jewish population."

Nowhere did I make the allegations Naimark attributes to me of "justifiable Polish resentment against Jewish perpetrators" or of "extensive Jewish participation in Soviet crimes." I wrote explicitly, on page 272: "The [Soviet] perpetrators were of different ethnic backgrounds; the Russians most likely predominated in number. Moreover, this [the different ethnic backgrounds] also applied to the victims of Soviet communism."

I deeply regret that my statements have been so misinterpreted.

Publications such as *Neighbors* and events such as the quickly shelved, faulty *Wehrmacht* in Germany exhibition only impede professional study and research worthy of these tragic events. Obviously some happenings in contemporary history arouse extraordinary passions, which, when they enter into historical discussions, can transform them into emotionally laden controversies that contribute little to understanding these sad events. I can only hope that these heinous crimes will one day be thoroughly researched and discussed with the necessary objectivity. The new, reconstituted *Wehrmacht* exhibition has shown that this is possible.

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