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A “Potent, Devilish Mixture” of Motives: Explanatory Strategy and Assignment of Meaning in Jan Gross’s *Neighbors*

William W. Hagen

The bloody and fiery mass murder at Jedwabne gives the lie, writes Jan Gross, to the “conventional wisdom” of Polish scholarship and public opinion that Polish society at large, unlike the “scum” who blackmailed the Jews or the few “heroes” who helped them, had no significant human connection to the Jews during their martyrdom at Nazi hands. Jedwabne offers damning evidence—of which still more lies unexamined in the archives—of Polish “collusion” in the Jewish extermination, a subject now marked by “general absence in Polish historiography.” How, Gross asks, “will the Polish public process [Jedwabne’s] revelation when it becomes public knowledge?”¹

Neighbors drags Polish collusion more shockingly into daylight than any scholarly work has ever done. It stands alongside the unforgettably heartless testimony of Polish Holocaust bystanders captured on film in Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* as witness to why, as Gross earlier wrote, “surviving Jews”—among others!—“are so profoundly and irrevocably scandalized by the Poles’ behavior” during the war.² Yet Gross’s own recent writings showcase long-public evidence, including perhaps most notably the physician Zygmunt Klukowski’s unsparing wartime journal, published in communist Poland in 1959, of Polish participation in the Jews’ murder. Gross might well have reminded his readers that Emanuel Ringelblum’s eyewitness study of late 1943, later published in English as *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, bulges with testimony of Poles’ violence toward their doomed Jewish neighbors.³

Nor was this any secret to wartime Poles. Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, author of perhaps the most famous—and also, because of its anti-Jewish accents, most infamous—published protest against her fellow Poles’ passivity toward the Jews’ martyrdom, lamented in an underground press article of May 1942 the “demoralization and savagery [*zdziczenia*], which the Jewish slaughters are causing among us.” Not only were Ukrainians and *Volksdeutsche* active in the “monstrous executions,” but “in many localities the local [Polish] population took part as volunteers. . . . To counteract such shamefulness, all available means should be employed: making it clear

1. Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, 2001), 8, 12, 140–41.

2. Jan T. Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists,” in István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, 2000), 80.

3. Zygmunt Klukowski, *Diary from the Years of Occupation, 1939–44*, trans. George Klukowski (Urbana, 1993); Emanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, ed. Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski, trans. by Dafna Allon, Danuta Dabrowska, and Dana Keren (New York, 1976).

to the people that they are becoming Herod's henchmen; condemning them in the underground press; calling for a social boycott of the butchers; threatening the murderers with the Republic's harsh punishment." These words, alongside much other evidence of Polish collaboration in the Jews' destruction, may be read in the most authoritative general history of the Jews in modern Poland, edited by the highly respected Jerzy Tomaszewski and widely distributed since its publication in 1993.⁴

It is, then, inaccurate to depict Polish collusion as a subject shrouded in silence. Doubtless there is a strong tendency among Poles to minimize it, or to balance it against Polish suffering and the admittedly fearsome dangers of Polish wartime engagement in the Jews' defense (though, as Gross earlier argued, some of the danger was self-imposed, not only in the treacherous behavior of Polish denunciators of Jews and their gentile protectors, but by virtue of the very infrequency of Polish disregard for German prohibitions of aid to Jews, in contrast to the Poles' massive disobedience in support of the Home Army and underground authorities).⁵

If *Neighbors* is something less than taboo-smashing, it can fairly claim to offer the most vivid, quasi-photo-realist account ever attempted of Polish involvement in the bloody handiwork, and the most ambitious effort to explain it and measure its significance. Displaying old-fashioned epistemological optimism, Gross promises "a reconstruction of what actually took place," as if the Jedwabne slaughter were a Kantian thing-in-itself definitively knowable through court records and eyewitness accounts. Gross's mode of emplotment, to expand upon Hayden White's rhetorical typology, might be termed forensic, complete with promises to prove his points "beyond a reasonable doubt"—a rare phrase among historians!⁶ Such language raises the question whether Gross, despite his intellectual self-awareness, always succeeds in escaping the gravitational force of perhaps the strongest of all interpretive languages among scholars of the Holocaust. As Zygmunt Bauman polemically put it: "discussion of guilt"—after the fashion of the courtroom exposé—"masquerades as the analysis of causes."⁷

Against Bauman it may be retorted that the hyper-empiricist strategy aims to condemn the perpetrator and simultaneously to explain his behavior by the testimony of his own words, as captured in first-person primary sources. It may be, Gross adds—invoking yet another familiar Holocaust studies trope—that "we will never 'understand' why it happened," though we must try to grasp "the implications" of this "foundational event of modern sensibility."⁸ The question follows whether Gross's "reconstruction" of the Jedwabne massacre helps us to do this.

4. Jerzy Tomaszewski, with Józef Adelson, Teresa Prekerowa, and Piotr Wróbel, *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950 roku)* (Warsaw, 1993), 351; cf. also 355. Prekerowa authored the chapters on the war and occupation. For further literature, see Michael C. Steinlauf's excellent *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, 1997).

5. Gross, "A Tangled Web," 76–80.

6. Gross, *Neighbors*, 20, 22.

7. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 2d ed. (Ithaca, 2000), xi.

8. Gross, *Neighbors*, 13.

Much has been said about the clashing perspectives that emerge from Gross's incomplete and in places contradictory evidence. A central question concerns the degree to which the Nazis compelled the Poles to stage the mass murder. Were there sixty German policemen in the town or not, and did they, or did they not, herd the men of Jedwabne to the town square and commission them to kill their Jewish fellow citizens? Did the Nazis refuse the town councillors the firearms they sought, seemingly with which to kill the Jews, issuing them whips and clubs instead? Gross's star witness, Szmul Wazersztajn, testified that the Germans ordered the murders, while Gross himself inclines to ascribe initiative to the town council. "But it is also an academic matter"—a strangely dismissive approach to "what actually happened"!—"since both sides *apparently* quickly agreed on the matter, and on the method of its implementation."⁹ Yet Gross also concedes, perhaps even rashly, that "had Jedwabne not been occupied by the Germans, the Jews . . . would not have been murdered by their neighbors."¹⁰

When faced with such empirical puzzles, historians turn to comparative analysis, and one wonders indeed why Gross, who readily concedes that it was German policy to stir up gentile massacres of east European Jews, did not contrast the Jedwabne massacre more systematically with the vast evidence on Nazi murder of Jews and other civilians in eastern Poland and the Ukraine following the outbreak of war in June 1941.¹¹ Gross's lack of access to the German-language literature may pose severe obstacles, but considerable local evidence survives in other idioms. Yet it seems that Gross's microhistorical ambition to bring the Jedwabne slaughter alive blocked this path to him. In any case, the riddles remain. But do they weigh heavily when it comes to constructing a causal explanation of the murders and the murderers' motives?

In the face of this question we encounter both a doubting author and a robustly confident one. From the perpetrators' own mouths there emerge self-exculpatory words that fail to name the factors Gross finds most important. He is left, like many social scientists and historians seeking to interpret their empirical findings, to *infer* or *impute* causality, rather than to derive it by *induction* from the perpetrators' testimony, as would be possible if they had admitted in court that they murdered to take revenge for Jewish behavior under the Soviet occupation (or for any other reasons, however self-deluding or self-serving, which they might plausibly have adduced). At one point, Gross emphasizes the deep-structural presence in the eastern borderlands of "peasant mobs"—though Jedwabne was a small town, not a village—and their "*rzeź i rabacja*" (slaughter and plunder). This, he hypothesizes, remained "in the standing repertory of collective behavior in these parts" and "played out every so often during the

9. *Ibid.*, 74 (my emphasis).

10. *Ibid.*, 78.

11. Gross, *Neighbors*, 132–33. Yet, despite Nazi policy, Gross concludes that, "in general nobody was forced to kill the Jews," though the Jedwabne record raises precisely this question without answering it unambiguously.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries," though his account of prewar Polish-Jewish relations in Jedwabne displayed no such previous violence.¹²

Yet how else to explain the cruelty, the use of "primitive, ancient methods and murder weapons," and the "absence of organization," if not by reference to "another, deeper, more archaic layer" of motivation underlying the "modernity" of the Holocaust that the scholarly literature, Gross writes (without citing authors), has emphasized. Jedwabne shows that the Holocaust, though an operation planned from afar in Hitler's lair, took "heterogeneous" shape on the ground, "hinging on unforced behavior"—though at Jedwabne Gross concedes some degree of German compulsion—and "rooted in God-knows-what motivations." Such considerations, despite the implied indeterminacy of individual intent, allow the historian to assess "responsibility for the killings," that is, to find the Jedwabne Poles guilty of self-willed crimes, and to calculate "the odds for survival" facing the Jews, by which Gross seems to say that, given Jedwabne's and the surrounding villages' attitudes, Jewish hopes for shelter from the Nazis were futile.¹³

In the end, Gross constructs a hierarchy of the Jedwabne horrors' causes. The murderer "could simultaneously endear himself to the new rulers, derive material benefits from his actions (it stands to reason that active pogrom participants had first pick in the division of leftover Jewish property), and go along with local peasants' traditional animosity toward the Jews. If we add to this mix encouragement by the Nazis and an easily whipped-up sense that one was settling scores with the 'Judeo-commune' for indignities suffered under the Soviet occupation—then who could resist such a potent, devilish mixture?"¹⁴ Gross adds, as an "indispensable precondition," a "prior brutalization [under the Soviet occupation of 1939–41] of interpersonal relations, demoralization, and a general license to use violence." In the accustomed vein of explaining pogroms by the political police's clandestine involvement, Gross adds that "it is not difficult to imagine" that more than one of the massacre's leaders had been, during the years of Sovietization, "secret collaborators" of the NKVD, as one participant admitted to being.¹⁵

Each ingredient of the devilish stew bears closer inspection. Self-ingratiation with the Nazis raises the question of how, by means of mass murder, the perpetrators aimed at this early moment in the German occupation to influence their new overlords. Granting Gross's important point that, contrary to nationalist orthodoxy, Poles in the Soviet occupation zone often greeted the Nazi invaders as liberators, the Jedwabne Poles' short-term priority must have been to escape the consequences of refusing to "put things in order with the Jews," as the typically cynical oblique Nazi incitement to the Jews' murder ran.¹⁶ The killers could have

12. Gross, *Neighbors*, 37–38, 122–23.

13. *Ibid.*, 124–25.

14. *Ibid.*, 162.

15. *Ibid.*, 162–63.

16. *Ibid.*, 103, 155.

known little of the Nazis' plans for Polish ethnocide, but that the Germans' arrival spelled doom for the Jews was unmistakable.¹⁷ Still, nothing suggests—nor does Gross argue—that the Poles freely undertook the killing to win German favor.

Plunder was always a prime motive in pre-Holocaust pogroms, which in the Polish lands—and excluding the politically and socially motivated slaughter of Jews alongside Polish Catholics that attended Bohdan Khmel'nyts'ki's 1648 rising in the Ukraine—were neither notably bloody nor frequent.¹⁸ Indeed, the word *pogrom* hardly describes killings such as those in Jedwabne, though Gross, like other Holocaust scholars, readily employs it. Pogroms aimed to “beat the Jews,” showing them who their political masters were and punishing them for their alleged enrichment at the pogromists' expense and other supposed transgressions, but not to kill them en masse. The 1941 slaughters in the east European borderlands were collective murders, components of the first stage of the Nazi “Final Solution.” The Jedwabne Poles may indeed have coveted their Jewish neighbors' property. Gross found that motives of theft and self-enrichment loom foremost in the town's present-day historical memory of the killers. But he offers no wartime testimony to this effect, and Jewish property, as Ringelblum showed, was to be had without murder.

As for “atavistic antisemitism,” the question of the Jedwabne Poles' anti-Jewish impulses is crucial and will reemerge in the pages below. Here the point suffices that Polish country-people's “traditional animosity” did not entail mass murder or genocidal violence. The killings of July 1941, like other murders during the Holocaust in Poland, must be contemplated in the light of Klukowski's October 1941 diary entry: “nobody ever dreamed that things like that are possible.” Of the Nazis'—and his Polish neighbors'—tormenting of the Jews, Klukowski noted that “something equally terrifying, horrible, was never seen or heard about by anybody.”¹⁹

“Encouragement by the Nazis” as an explanation stands at cross-purposes to Gross's insistence, concerning Jedwabne and similar massacres, that the local population—and here the emphasis is his—“involved in killing of Jews did so of its own free will.”²⁰ It is revealing that Jedwabne Poles assaulted Jews, with some murderous results, before the mass killing of 10 July 1941, yet by Gross's own account the collective murder did

17. See Hans-Christian Harten, *De-Kulturation und Germanisierung: Die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Erziehungspolitik in Polen, 1939–1945* (Frankfurt, 1996), which includes references to the older literature.

18. The worst Polish pogrom on record since the partitions was the militarily sparked violence in Lwów/Lemberg in November 1918, which claimed some 72 dead and 443 wounded among its Jewish victims. Frank Golczewski, *Polnisch-jüdische Beziehungen 1881–1922: Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Antisemitismus in Osteuropa* (Wiesbaden, 1981), 197. See also Josef Bendow (pseud. for Joseph Tenenbaum), *Der Lemberger Judenpogrom November 1918–Jänner 1919* (Vienna, 1919); Leon Chasanowitsch, *Die polnischen Judenpogrome im November und Dezember 1918: Tatsachen und Dokumente* (Stockholm, 1919); Maciej Kozłowski, *Zapomniana Wojna: Walka o Lwów i Galicję Wschodnią 1918–1919* (Bydgoszcz, 1999), chap. 17.

19. Klukowski, quoted in Gross, “A Tangled Web,” 90–91.

20. Gross, *Neighbors*, 133.

indeed follow from German "encouragement." As for "settling scores with the 'Judeo-commune,'" this impulse doubtless also motivated anti-Semitic violence, both in revenge for what Gross, despite having authored an invaluable book on life's terrors under Soviet occupation (especially for Poles), now benignly calls "indignities," and more generally to punish the Jews for the torment and humiliation of Polish defeat and renewed subjection. Yet genocidal murder directed against victims who were transparently powerless far transcends any concept of settling scores. Similarly, "prior brutalization" under Soviet occupation certainly weakened inhibitions in the exercise of violence, while the presence of NKVD collaborators aiming to cover their tracks might suggest something important about the massacre's leadership. But, again, neither of these conditions leads ineluctably to mass murder.

Gross also compares the Jedwabne Poles to Christopher Browning's "ordinary men" (though Gross labels them "ordinary Germans") who, as members of Nazi police squads behind the front, carried out mass shootings of the Jews.²¹ The Poles too—here Gross switches to Daniel Goldhagen's idiom—were "willing executioners."²² This, for Gross, is thin explanatory ice, for Browning's conclusion was that the German policemen committed murder in *passive compliance* with orders from above, fearful of exclusion from group solidarity should they resist, while Goldhagen's "Germans" killed from burning "eliminationist" conviction, aiming to rid their country, and the world, of the Jews.²³ This was an extremist mentality that Gross never imputes to the Jedwabne Poles, nor to Polish political culture, despite the anti-Semitism it harbored.

I admire Jan Gross's earlier books. *Revolution from Abroad* is an especially impressive work of intrepid and original research, artful presentation, and stimulating, risk-taking analysis.²⁴ *Neighbors* is a gripping read and a challenging intervention in a discussion of profound importance. It displays great moral engagement and a readiness to explore terrain lying beyond Gross's previous, measuredly and conventionally pro-Polish positions. Yet, it does not altogether persuade me. Although it illuminates some of the Jedwabne Poles' motives, both demonstrable and thinkable, it does not penetrate their perception of the cultural meaning of the inhuman violence they visited on their Jewish neighbors.

This may be asking too much, but, in my view, the greatest challenge the Holocaust poses is to grasp the cultural logic by which its local agents, and the mass of observers from whose midst the murderers stepped forward, judged it to be a morally tolerable, or perhaps even existentially necessary, act. Scholars and nonscholars alike often lament the seeming meaninglessness—by which they often mean the illiberal "irrationality"—

21. Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, 1998).

22. Gross, *Neighbors*, 120–21.

23. Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, 1996).

24. Jan Tomasz Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton, 1988).

of the genocidal nightmare. Yet any understanding of human life resting on historico-empiricist, Weberian, or cultural-anthropological premises—such as most readers of this journal probably embrace—will insist that it is precisely the meanings participants invest in such murderous actions that make them understandable to ourselves or, put differently, make them amenable to our faculty of reason.

Relying on utilitarian risk-benefit (or rational-choice) theory, or on sociopolitical structural analysis, powerful though these tools are in their different ways, will forever block fundamental insights into the human subjectivities of the Holocaust era, where the cultural significance of mass murder to its contemporaries, and their moral reckonings with it, must be sought. It may be objected that such meanings and reckonings are undiscoverable, either because they did not exist in most people's thoughts, or because—whether at the societal or individual level—they were riddled with incoherence and contradictions. If so, we will be condemned to contemplate the Holocaust as we do physical nature, knowing (at best) the laws that govern it but forever ignorant of its deepest origins.

At present, the scholarly literature follows two strategies of Holocaust analysis.²⁵ One stresses the “cold” violence of the processes and logics of “western modernity”; the other highlights the “hot” violence of ideological intoxication. Among many distinguished exponents of the first interpretive mode are Raul Hilberg, Hannah Arendt, Martin Broszat, and subsequent historians in the “functionalist” vein, including Christopher Browning, and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. The larger context in which they operate is the macrohistorical narrative of western modernity as a Marxian-Weberian-Foucauldian process of disenchantment, rationalization, bureaucratization, subjection to “scientific” authority, identity-formation from above, and consequent self-alienation.

In the second camp are “intentionalist” historians, insisting on the centrality of ideological anti-Semitism in the minds and hearts of Holocaust perpetrators high and low and on the persistence of “ancient hatreds” that erupted in ideologically rationalized forms in the Hitler-Stalin era. Near them stand those who see the genocidal nightmare as a passionate, emotion-driven acting-out against “civilization and its discontents.” Here may be found the analysis of fascist violence as a reversion to primordial emulation-placation of tyrannical and bloody Nature offered in Theodor W. Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), as well as in the Freudian texts to which they pay tribute, and more broadly in much of the psychologically informed literature on racism and ethnic violence.

Both interpretive schools are capable of conveying rich insights, but the first approach suffers from having to treat values or motives, including ideologies such as anti-Semitism, even when “scientized” and thus “rationalized,” as exogenous to modernity's logic. Yet, upon closer inspection, the rationality of modernity is one of means, not of ends. The second

25. Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 4th ed. (New York, 2000); Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover, N.H., 1987).

approach suffers, in its metapsychological versions, from difficulties of empirical verification and dependence on more or less apodictic theories of human psychodynamics. Where it emphasizes "ancient hatreds," it likewise is hard-pressed to explain why they exist, and why they seemingly slumber for long periods, only to break out later in unprecedented new forms. Notoriously, Daniel Goldhagen offered no coherent explanation of the "eliminationist antisemitism" he attributed to "the German people" as a (pre-1945) transhistorical social-cultural unity. This school of thought is continually in danger of seeing its preferred independent variable—passionate, violence-infused hatred—fall into dependency on social conditions, above all, Durkheimian *anomie* and "modernization crises," triggering ideologized aggression against outsiders and scapegoats.²⁶

About Jedwabne, Jan Gross is doubtless right, even if one does not accept his analytical vocabulary, to invoke the "heterogeneity" of the intersection of local culture and the genocidal project the Nazis imported in eastern Europe. But he makes no use of the rich ethnographic literature on Polish village culture and is content rather to point, without attempting to account for them, to "peasant mobs" and "atavistic antisemitism." In the English-language literature alone there are two masterly works essential to Gross's theme: Aleksander Hertz's *The Jews in Polish Culture* (1961) and Alina Cała's *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (1995), the latter based on survey research among country-people in eastern and southeastern Poland in the 1970s and 1980s, many of them Holocaust witnesses.²⁷

From both works emerges the point that Polish rural folk culture cast the Jews as magically charged "sacred strangers" in the Christian Poles' midst. The Jews were a source of anxiety, not only because their rites were widely thought to require Christian blood, but because they played a vital role in the sacred calendar and could upset all-important cycles of human fertility and vegetation. Yet in many striking ways they also embodied and portended good fortune. "The Jew aroused fear but also respect." "The Jews were dangerous, but their existence was necessary."²⁸ Their genocidal death struck Polish folk culture with the force of an apocalyptic event. Many of Cała's respondents believed the mass murder "came from God." As one said, "God sent Hitler in order to destroy them. War is never from people, only from God. It is God who wages war."²⁹

On Cała's evidence, which could be buttressed with the scholarly pogrom literature and investigations into rural violence showing that beatings were far more prevalent than murder, nothing in Polish folk culture warranted genocidal slaughter, though nothing commanded the villagers to stay the cosmic hand executing the Jews' collective death-

26. On these and related interpretive issues, see William W. Hagen, "Before the 'Final Solution': Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Antisemitism in Interwar Germany and Poland," *Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (1996): 1–31.

27. Aleksander Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, trans. Richard Lourie (Evanston, 1988); Alina Cała, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (Jerusalem, 1995).

28. Cała, *Image of the Jew*, 128, 131, 150, 222.

29. *Ibid.*, 116.

sentence, once it had been, inscrutably, pronounced. Where, then, to look for the Jedwabne Poles' self-justification of the murder in which, on Gross's reckoning, half of the town's men in one way or another participated? A very striking rationale for the murder that emerges from his evidence (though it is left unanalyzed) may be found in the words the Jews were commanded to sing as they suffered death's torments: "the war is because of us, the war is for us." Revealing too is eyewitness testimony that the Poles rejoiced, followed the Soviet retreat, that "they"—the "Russkies"—"will no longer deport us."³⁰

As Gross's *Revolution from Abroad* showed, Soviet deportation of Poles (and non-Poles) from the east European borderlands, paired with massive and lethal local imprisonment of men (and shootings of resisters), amounted to mass murder, or even genocide.³¹ The war, and the Stalinist furies that it brought, confronted the borderland Poles with the probability of their social (and individual) extinction. They faced their own end-of-the-world terror, which, I propose, the murderers among them requited by slaughtering the Jews as its *ideologically* (not religiously, or "traditionally") prescribed agents. But whence the ideology? Throughout *Neighbors* Gross refrains from any sustained discussion of Polish political anti-Semitism, though he notes that Jedwabne lay in a stronghold of the aggressively anti-Semitic National Democrats' (Endeks') party, and though one of the perpetrators, the then-youthful Jerzy Łudański, excused his murderous deeds by saying "I was raised in an area of intense struggles against the Jews."³² Here, though Gross does not make the point, a probably not untypical Jedwabne killer confesses, plausibly enough, that he acted from an ideological conviction instilled in him by the political environment in which he lived.

Cała—and, among others, Ringelblum—see anti-Semitism as an urban movement, penetrating a countryside familiar with print-media ideologies only to the extent that it was systematically propagated by local schoolteachers and bureaucrats, activists from the towns, and the (largely though not uniformly anti-Semitic) Catholic clergy. Jedwabne, as a small town in Endek country, may have been saturated with ideological anti-Semitism, though Gross's evidence does not establish this point. Yet, with the arrival of the Nazis and their program of Jewish extermination, the Jedwabne perpetrators must have found it easy to adjust Endek ideology, which called for the Jews' socioeconomic marginalization and eventual removal from Poland, though not by bloody means, to the murderous conditions of Nazi occupation, the more so as the Soviet occupation had accustomed everyone, and especially the Poles, to fear for their own violent extinction.

I conclude with the hypothesis, which upon fuller study of the rich primary sources and the scholarly literature on the cultural meaning of violence may prove sustainable, that the Jedwabne murder enacted a

30. Gross, *Neighbors*, 99, 153–54.

31. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 222 and chaps. 5–6 passim.

32. Gross, *Neighbors*, 118.

revenge-killing of victims burdened with a cosmic guilt who, in their putative association with the pitiless Soviet fist, had brushed the murderers themselves, like all borderland Poles, with death. At the same time, the Jews by their very presence, marked for Nazi slaughter as they were, were the embodiment of social death, and the harbingers of the most frightening fate, should the Nazis impose it beyond the Jews' ranks. It is thinkable that the Jedwabne perpetrators murdered their neighbors for this reason too, to ritually cleanse their intimate precincts of bearers of doom.