

Thompson book review from 7

"Żydzi w UB - próba weryfikacji stereotypu," in *Komunizm:ideologia, system, ludzie*, edited by Tomasz Szarota. Warsaw: Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2001, p. 197).

There were approximately 25 million Polish Catholics in Poland in 1945. There were approximately 250,000 Jews in Poland in 1945. After a little arithmetic, we find that the proportion of Jews who opted to join the UB was 42 times that of Catholics. Gross does not dispute the fact that the proportion of Jews willing to work for the secret police was higher than that of the Catholics. But he gives an intriguing explanation for why this was so (Fear, p. 227): "But the MBP did not look specifically for Jews to fill the available positions. There was an overall shortage of qualified personnel; people were being pulled every which way to take jobs all over the new administration and what one ended up doing was very often a matter of pure coincidence."

In other words, the reason for the alarmingly higher proportion of Jews than that of Catholics in the UB was the relatively greater competence of the Jews. And that competitive advantage must have been substantial, as the ratio of 42 would indicate. In Gross's analysis, there is no attention given to the fact a Polish Catholic who joined the UB would be regarded as a traitor to his nation and would be excommunicated from his Church. By Gross's calculus, Polish Catholics were "under-represented" in the UB because they were less competent.

The invasion of Poland by Germany and Russia in September of 1939 was an unprovoked partition of the country. It is understood that the Poles were not pleased by the Russian occupation, but it may be thought that the Russian occupation was a minor annoyance compared to the occupation by the Germans. In an earlier book, *Revolution from Abroad* written in his pre-postmodern days, when Gross was an associate professor at Emory, Gross carefully and with excellent documentation shows how wrong this notion was. He wrote (*Revolution from Abroad*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1st ed., p. 229): "These very conservative estimates show that the Soviets killed or drove to their deaths three or four times as many people as the Nazis from a population half the size of that under German jurisdiction. This comparison holds for the first two years of the Second World War, the period before the Nazis began systematic mass annihilation of the Jewish population."

Soviet terror

Gross shows that, for Polish Catholics, the Soviets were even worse, indeed much worse than the brutal Nazis. Essentially, all the Polish professional and semi-professional classes (doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, managers, foremen, farmers with holdings beyond a few acres, etc.) were rounded up by the Soviets and then either killed immediately or retained in prisons for shipments to slave labour camps in Siberia and Central Asia. Prison conditions were hellish, worse than those in the Nazi concentration camps. Gross writes (*Revolution*, p. 161): "In Lwów, 28 people

living in an 11.5-square-metre cell relied on the geometrical skills of a gifted high-school student who fitted them most ingeniously by size into an intricate pattern." Sanitary conditions were appalling, with inmates frequently forced to urinate and defecate on the floors of the cells.

Jews welcomed Soviet invasion

What was the situation with the Jews in the lands occupied by the Soviets and what was their attitude to the occupiers? Gross writes (*Revolution*, p. 32): "What Poles and Ukrainians report, often with biting irony, the Jews do not deny: 'Jews greeted the Soviet army with joy. The youth were spending days and evenings with the soldiers ... Jews received incoming Russians enthusiastically; they (the Russians) also trusted them (the Jews).'"

Again, Gross writes (*Revolution*, p. 34, quoting Celina Konińska): "It is hard to find words to describe the feeling - this waiting and this happiness. We wondered how to express ourselves - to throw flowers? To sing? To organize a demonstration? How to show our great joy? I think the Jews awaiting the Messiah will feel, when he finally comes, the way we felt." These warm receptions by Jews for the Soviets in eastern Poland were in September of 1939, when there were no Germans in sight. The Jews were rejoicing over the occupation of eastern Poland by the Russians. To Polish Catholics, this was simply treason, analogous to the occasional warm receptions in western Poland of the Germans by some Volksdeutsche.

Now, it is undeniable that in the German-occupied portion of Poland, where the situation of the Jews was worse than that of the Catholics, many Polish families hid Jews from the Nazi occupiers. It is a matter of record that Poles are listed at Yad Vashem numerically first amongst the righteous Gentiles for risking their lives and those of their families for sheltering Jews from the Nazis. So, it is fair to ask the question, "When did Jews use their favoured position in Soviet-occupied eastern Poland to shelter Polish Catholics from the NKVD?" This reviewer regrets to say that he cannot find any instances of such assistance.

Soviet executions of Polish Catholics

Up to the day (June 22, 1941) when Hitler broke his deal with Stalin and invaded Soviet-occupied Poland, Gross (*Revolution*, p. 194) estimates that 1.25 million people were transported into the Soviet Union from eastern Poland. The ghastly NKVD prisons in Poland were generally used as holding cells for Poles awaiting execution or prison train space for transportation to the gulags. When the Germans attacked the Soviets on June 22, 1941, the NKVD killed or moved to the east 150,000 prisoners from these holding cells. In the Brygidki prison in Lwów, on June 22, 1941, the NKVD killed almost all of the 13,000 inmates. (*Revolution*, p. 179). This was recorded by Gross as a "massacre," rather than a pogrom. After the Nazis occupied western Poland in 1939, they encouraged anti-Semitic acts by the Poles, including pogroms. The Germans had only the most minimal success. Polish Catholics were not inclined to participate in Nazi murders. Moreover, the Polish underground punished betrayal of Jews to the Nazis by death.

After the Russians rapidly retreated following the German attack of June 22, 1941, in the brief time interval before the Germans could take over, there was a number of killings of collaborators, including many Jews, by the Polish underground. One example of such took place in Szczuczyn, where there were four NKVD prisons. Gross gives such killings as evidence of Polish anti-Semitism. But, we still must wonder why the Polish Catholics in German-occupied western Poland, where pogroming was a state-subsidized activity, had not engaged in such activities.

Gross's allegations are false; financial claims outrageous

As stated early on in this review, Professor Gross disdains to use empirical timeline data and Aristotelian logic to prove his point. To those of us who believe in logical conclusions based on facts, his thesis does not hold water. Worse, it is beyond mean-spirited to treat Catholic Poland, victimized by half a century of brutal and systematic rape, as though it were itself a rapist. And to offer up Catholicism, the faith that has sustained the Polish nation in its 50-year-long ordeal, as an underlying cause of Poland's alleged anti-Semitism is not acceptable. There is no question that there is a very large choir with whom Gross's voice resonates. The Jews lost property during the Second World War in Poland and the Poles must pay for it. If the cupboard is bare, if there is massive deprivation, even starvation in Poland, it makes no difference.

This raises another question. According to Teresa Bochwic (*Rzeczpospolita*, August 3, 2002), two out of three of the current residents of Poland have either suffered the loss of their homes as a result of World War II and the events following or are descendants of those who have. The organs of state security, led by such persons as Jakub Berman, and the Soviet NKVD, were directly responsible for the deaths of over one million Polish Catholics. Where should the Catholic victims go for redress of grievances? Poles ask simply to be left alone, to be freed from quasi-legal attacks by those who would keep them oppressed forever. Poland had the highest proportion of deaths during World War II (17 per cent of the population). Next to the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. and Great Britain, Poland contributed the greatest number of troops in the war against Hitler. The Polish underground produced the highest number of attacks against the Nazis of any occupied country and suffered the greatest retaliations. There was no Quisling or Petainist government in Poland. Collaboration with the Nazis was rare and punished by the underground by death. Poland has the largest number of "righteous Gentiles" recorded at Yad Vashem. It should take more than post-modern sermonizing to justify the further victimization of this long-suffering nation.

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Most likely, this court ruling is just a temporary delay in the government's campaign to attack illegal immigration. There is a very vocal segment of our population that feels strongly about enforcement of the immigration laws and has put pressure on Congress and the administration to take action. Under the present political climate, immigrants and their employers can only expect continuously increasing government regulation and scrutiny of employment of non-citizens in this country, while the prospect of immigration reform seems ever more unlikely in the next several years. □

Archbishop from 8

ways, they still cherish and greatly value their roots."

He concluded: "In the last few years Polish Catholic Communities have become a spiritual harbour and natural refuge for new Polish migrants seeking their fortune in Britain."

Mgr Kukla emphasised: "Polish Catholic Communities do not see themselves as isolated islands. They are an integral part of the Diocesan and Universal Church, enriching it with different forms of piety and religiousness; and as such are a source of apostolate in our secularized society."

Before Mass three old Polish soldiers - members of the ex-combatants Association, who fought with the British 8th Army during the Second World War - proudly brought in the Association flag.

Archbishop Wesoły wore a white chasuble with a beautiful intricately-woven picture of Our Lady of Częstochowa, the Queen of Poland, on a red background.

At the Offertory the gifts were brought up by young Polish girls dressed in national costume, while during Mass the evocative Polish singing, led by the Polish choir, filled the city centre church, packed to overflowing for the joyful and memorable occasion. □

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Janek's Corner from 4**Statistcs don't lie**

The voting was well-attended which has been the aforementioned victory of democracy. This was an ultimate expression of the Poles' opinion about the government. Why was it so critical? From the Constitutional Court's ruling not being respected by the government which criticized one of the most important decisions to have been made by the Constitutional Court this year, i.e. the lustration problem (which was a PiS priority), to the Ministry of Education's childish and populist decisions, e.g. a change in the rules of Matura (the national examination which enables high school graduates to continue their studies at a university) which constituted that even if you have not managed to pass this exam, you actually did pass it, and the obligatory uniforms at elementary schools and junior high schools nationally, to treating nurses as apparent offenders, etc. all that has given the image of the former government, which Poles commented on by voting.

The result of voting was hugely affected by young generations in Poland and emigrants in the UK. The US emigrants did not have such big impact on the results - why? This is a question I am unable to answer unfortunately. □

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