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The period between 1939 to 1941 remains a historical predisposition for the Jews and Nazi-Germans as it was the period of the Holocaust. It was a time that the rivalry between the Jews and Nazi emanated. In light of this, many Jews were murdered by people whom they had lived cohesively. The details of those events are detailed by two books written by Jan Gross and Jan Karski respectively. Published on diverse dates, these books chronicle the events that happened in a realistic approach. The events that catapulted the mass murders of Polish Jews are chronicled in Jan T. Gross's book, *Neighbors: The destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* by fellow citizens in a village resided by the Nazi's in Poland.

In the book published in 2001, the author uses pieces of eye witnesses' accounts to produce the book that received criticism across the geographical divide. Murderous acts were carried out by people on Jedwabne's existing Jews. It was in 1941 and the Jews knew the people who carried out the act well. They had lived cohesively but on this fateful day, their friends turned to foes.

The murderous acts were executed in an inhuman way. For example, the Jewish population in Poland were confined in a barn then set on fire. On the other hand, the *Story of a secret state*, written by Jan Karski provides a personal experience of the Nazi-Jewish mass killings in Poland. Karski was a doctoral student in Poland.

He gives an account of how the killings were executed in his book. Published in 1944, the book delves information and the details of the massacre from a personal view. Karski narrates that while in a group of other Polish soldiers,

they were held hostage by Russian soldiers under wooden barns. In light of this, Karski plotted an escape with the help of fellow hostage, Lieutenant Kurpios. He underwent numerous traps and landed himself as a Polish underground in various countries including France. He travelled to London to inform the Polish government in exile there on the pains of the Jewish people[1]. In his experiences he encountered the difficulties that the Jewish community was undergoing in their foreign land.

## **Critique**

Gross's book has arguably led to a foray of criticism from various quarters.

These quarters have been ethnologists and historians. Gross relied heavily on third party knowledge with minimal consultations in other study tools such as historical facts in archives. Historians argue that Gross's work is more like a journal article and not as a work of history. For example, he uses the setting of burning barn of Jedwabne to construct Polish-Jewish relations. He arguably focuses on particulars to make generalizations, simply known as inductive reasoning. For instance, he makes generalizations on limited data. Moreover, the book is so shallow in giving the details of the massacre.

It largely details the attacks with minimal literature on the reasons for the attacks. A casual reader with prior knowledge of the atrocities committed might find it hard to understand the book. For example, the book only chronicles the events of the massacre, making it partial. This implies that it looks at the massacre from a one-sided perspective without giving the reader the other side of the coin [2] Another major flaw in Gross's work was his alienation of facts that the pre-war Jewish- Polish relations had

considerable effects on the Jedwabne massacre. He largely depended on the accounts of a single Jew to analyze the effects and chronology of the war.

Gross singled out that the wars experienced in the town were more detrimental to the relations of the Jewish and Polish individuals unlike others in the regions. In his analytical book, he only focused on those wars and did not discuss into details their etiology. In light of this, he provided a one-sided approach into the massacre. For example, he could have arguably detailed the reasons that led into the massacre and not only victimizing one side [3]

### **Story of a secret state**

The plot analysis in the book is over riddled by the monotonous description of his encounters although it was a personal experience narration by Jan Karski. Moreover, personal narrations are overly dotted with fictitious parts. He hugely, just like Gross relied on his personal experiences eluding other important historical literature that could have helped to shape the story [4] Even though the story was aimed at propagating a historical ideology, it takes the avenue of literature story telling genres such as narratives.

By including personal experiences heavily on the story he washes out the historical salt in the massacre. For example, he takes considerable space in the book to discuss his intricacies in the war as opposed to telling the reader about the happenings. In light of this, Karski only shapes the discussion from his experiences without involving any other secondary source to spice up his story.

## **Historical Context**

The book has analytically given a green light on the events that shaped today's German-Jews rivalry. Although it analyzed the Holocaust from a particular to a generalized standpoint, it arguably shaped the research platform on the rivalry between the Nazi-Germans and Jews.

In light of this, the book articulates the birth rivalry due to the murderous acts committed against Jews. In this regard, the enmity tries to articulate as they happened in real times. Historians argue that for an author to claim to write history, acknowledging the works of other writers in the same subject is not only important but also shapes the overall work. It gives the work a background to rely on. For example, it takes account of a sole soldier to tell the story without putting emphasis into secondary literature.

Such actions water down the premises and subsequent conclusions that emanate from the historical-driven works. Usage of the same would have created a critical ingredient to achievement recognition in the story.

However, Gross alluded to these vital precautions thus deeming his work rather a literature oriented story than a historical one[5].

## **Story of a secret state**

Similarly to Gross's work Karski left out a critical avenue for historical representations. He focused on narration as opposed to prose in telling out the story of the massacre.

In light of this, he skipped numerous historical instances experienced in the course of his encounters in Poland to bring out a rather weak historical

hypothesis. For example, he only uses his personal experience to tell the story. Although it brings the reader close to the events that happened in the Jedwabne massacre, it lacked historical taste.

However, it would be unrealistic to abandon the reality that the book has arguably helped in shaping the historical background of the Holocaust.

Historians articulate the books as the avenues that enabled the realization of the Holocaust. For instance, after the production of the books, the Holocaust events became realities to many leaders notably in the political and religious spheres. This is because the books were published after the Holocaust since Karski worked as an undercover agent.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the two books have provided a credible analysis. By using the personal accounts of individuals, the books have shed light on the intricacies of the Holocaust and also providing critical historical literature for future generations. By reading the books, an individual relates with the events like they happened yesterday due to the clear usage of the language. Moreover, the books have used good language to be understood by all individuals regardless of the academic disciplines. For example, the books can provide a critical grounding for not only history scholars but also religious and theological studies. Religious and theological scholars can effectively apply the knowledge gained from the book to analyze the religious distribution in the world.

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