

AP/HIST 3843 3.0 2018 Guidelines for the Essay

This essay will be a **historiographical essay**, which unlike a research essay, does not rely on primary sources. Instead, students will be asked to compare and contrast different views that 3 historians have on a topic of their choice in the history of World War Two.

The goals are a) to reach a deeper understanding of a specific event or topic, and b) to analyse the books that historians produce on the same topic and explore their similarities and differences as well as their unique contributions.

1. Choose your Topic and books

If you want to do a topic that is off the list (at the end of this guideline), please consult with me directly. Note that the book list is only a beginning – there are entire libraries filled with books on these topics – so you should feel free to go off the list. I do ask **that each of you review your book choices with me** to ensure that they will be easy to work with to complete the assignment.

Please do not use any edited collections – edited collections are very difficult to work with for this kind of assignment.

2) Read each book, paying close attention to the following:

- the book's principal argument (thesis)
- the book's structure (chapter breakdown, supporting arguments etc.)
- the sources used (primary and secondary)
- what the author's perspective is (we call this BIAS, in the sense that all authors have a specific point of view)
- when it was published, and why this matters
- what methodology and approach are used
- how convincing the author is
- how well the author makes use of his or her sources
- possible omissions, gaps, or weaknesses in the argument
- overall assessment of the book's success in achieving its goal

When you have done this, write out an assessment of each (we will look at an academic book review in class to give you a good sense of how to do this).

3) Put your material together.

Once you have assessed all three books, put the books together in the final section. Assess what we learn about the war from them collectively, and what further research might be needed.

4) Make sure your essay has all of the following:

- a) When editing, look for decent transitions between sections. The last sentence of a section should lead the reader naturally to the following section. You can use subtitles, but note that you should still have good transition sentences.
- b) You do not need a title page (your name, student number and title of the paper can be at the top of the first page)
- c) Please make sure each page is numbered
- d) Please ensure you have a bibliography with complete **bibliographic information** at the end of your essay. You should double-space.
- e) I welcome double-sided assignments to save paper, but this is not a requirement.
- f) When citing and quoting your sources, please use footnotes or endnotes. We will review how to do these in class. Historians generally use **Chicago style** footnotes; examples are below.

The first time you cite your book:

Smith, John. *The French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 454.

After you have cited an author once, if you do so again in a footnote immediately following, you can use "Ibid" but if you cite again a page later, use the author's last name and page number.

Example:

1. Smith, John. *The French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 454.
2. Ibid., p. 453.
3. Martin, Gail, "Harvest Failures and the Outbreak of Revolution in France," in *Journal of French Studies* 2, no. 1 (1998): 24.
4. Smith, 264.

Some Suggested Topics and Books for the Essay

General accounts of World War Two:

Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War*
 Weinberg, Gerhard. *A World at Arms: a Global History of World War II.*
 Zeiler, Thomas. *Annihilation: a global Military History of World War II*

The Path to War:

Overy, Richard and Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Road to War*
 Reynolds, David. *From Munich to Pearl Harbour: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War*
 Aster, Sydney, *1939: the Making of the Second World War*
 Rock, *British Appeasement in the 1930s*

Imlay, Talbot. *Facing the Second World War: Strategy, Politics, and Economics in Britain and France, 1938-1940*

The Homefront:

Collingham, Lizzie. *The Taste of War: WWII and the Battle for Food*

Seyedwitz, Max. *Civil Life in Wartime Germany: the Story of the Home Front*

Robert Beck, *Under the Bombs: the German Homefront, 1942-1945*

Hegarty, Marilyn *Victory Girls, khaki-wackies, and patriotutes: the regulation of female Sexuality during World War II*

Yamashita, Samuel Hideo, *Daily Life in wartime Japan, 1940-1945*

Resistance, Collaboration and daily life:

Gellately, Robert. *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany Life*

Stargardt, Nick. *Witnesses of War*

Hoffman, Peter. *The History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945*

McDonough, Frank. *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany*

Luzzatto, Sergio. *Primo Levi's Resistance: Rebels and Collaborators in Occupied Italy*

Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*

Vesna Drapac and Gareth Pritchard, *Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler's Empire*

The Eastern Front:

Overy, Richard. *Russia's War: a History of the Soviet War Effort, 1941-1945*

Anthony Beevor, *Stalingrad: the Fateful Siege*

Bartov, Omer, *The Eastern Front 1941-1945: German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare*

Dallin, A. *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945*

Dyke, C. van *the Soviet Invasion of Finland, 1939-1940*

Erikson, J. *the Road to Stalingrad*

The Soldier Experience:

Bartov, Omer *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich*

David Killingray, *Fighting for Britain: African Soldiers in World War Two*

Gleeson, Ian. *The Unknown Force: Black, Indian and Coloured Soldiers through Two World Wars*

Booker, Bryan D. *African Americans in the United States Army in World War II*

Holocaust:

Gross, Jan. *Neighbours: the Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*

Bergen, Doris. *War and Genocide: a Concise History of the Holocaust*

Clendinne, Inga. *Reading the Holocaust.*

Roseman, Mark. *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting. Wannsee and the Final Solution*

Marrus, Michael *The Holocaust in History*

Browning, Christopher R. *Ordinary Men: Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland.*

Fleming, G. *Hitler and the Final Solution*

War in the Pacific

David Marr, *Vietnam 1945*

Dower, John. *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific*

John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*

Marston, Daniel, ed. *The Pacific War: from Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima.*

Thorne, Christopher. *Issue of War: States, Societies, and the Far Eastern Conflict, 1941-1945*

Willmott, H.P. *the Second World War in the Far East*

Empires at war:

Jennings, Eric. *Vichy in the Tropics*

Eric Jennings, *Free French Africa in World War Two*

Andrea Jackson et al, *An Imperial World at War: the British Empire, 1939-1945*

Yasmin Kahn, *India at War: the Subcontinent and the Second World War*

Kaushik Roy, *India and World War Two: War, Armed Forces and Society, 1939-1945*

Mazower, Mark *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Rules Europe*

Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*

“In time we hate that which we often fear.”
- William Shakespeare
Antony and Cleopatra - Act 1, scene 3

Books about the architects of the Final Solution fill a library that will never be full. Only recently have historians begun digging into regional archives to investigate the men who had pulled triggers or herded millions of people onto trains destined for specially designed killing centres. What has been unearthed is almost as troubling as the killings themselves. Once safely at a distance, the blurry images of the executioners, the faceless murdering machines in grey uniforms, have come into focus as policemen, businessmen, farmers, councilmen, Germans, non-Germans, fathers, husbands, sons. And while there is reasonable consensus about what they did, who they were and why they murdered has ignited a lively academic debate. This paper examines that debate by reviewing three books which focus on the men who did the actual killings: *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* by Christopher R. Browning, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* by Daniel J. Goldhagen, and *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* by Jan T. Gross.

Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* offers disturbing insight into the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 (RPB101). Browning argues that they were not specially selected killers but human beings who represented a regular cross-section of German society — the titular ordinary men. Published in 1992, the book's genesis lay in Browning's attempt to reconcile the vast scope of the intense rate of murder of Poland's decentralized Jewish population vis-à-vis the limited manpower available to the Germans from 1942 to 1943.¹ His search for answers led him to the

¹ Browning, Christopher R., *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), p. xvi.

post-war testimonies of some RPB101 members. The book is based almost entirely on these testimonies. In his final analysis, Browning uses a social-psychological approach to synthesize the information gleaned from the testimonies with psychological experiments that were conducted to test theories on authority, conformity and compliance.

Browning opens in the Polish town of Józefów, the site of RPB101's initiation into mass murder. Here he reveals the "extraordinary offer" that Major Trapp, the unit's commander, extended to some of his men: those who did not wish to participate could fall out.² Browning astutely uses this event — the choice the men faced — to frame his argument throughout the book. Chapters Two and Three provide context with a brief history of the Police Battalions, from their inception as part of the Freikorps to their deployment to the occupied territories in the east. Here, Browning uses these chapters to point out that most of the men had volunteered to avoid conscription into the army and that they had done so before the war.³ These are facts Browning uses to prove conclusively that the men had not engaged in self-selection for the killing squads. He reinforces this argument in Chapter 5 by pointing out their average age (too old to have been educated by the Nazis during their formative years), working-class backgrounds (more likely to have held socialist or communist views), and the fact that they came from Hamburg (one of the least "nazified" cities in German.)⁴

The following two chapters piece together the testimonies to form a narrative of the unit's first "action", upon which Browning's conclusions are largely based. After Major Trapp's offer, a small number of men chose not to participate in the killings. The Jews of Józefów were rounded up and the shootings were carried out haphazardly. Some men shot all through the day, others shot

² Ibid., p. 2.

³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴ Ibid., p. 48.

a few victims before asking to be excused (10-20% by Browning's estimate)⁵, others shirked and evaded. Browning also highlighted the men who disobeyed orders. In one instance, they were ordered to shoot the infants during the roundup; instead, the men allowed them to be brought to the collection point and received no reprimand for disobeying orders.⁶ The sources tell of the dejected state of the men when they returned to the barracks following the massacre. The killings took an emotional toll on many of them.⁷

For the remainder of the book, up to the conclusion, Browning documents the various deportations and killings in which RPB101 participated. The difference between later massacres and Józefów is that the unit mostly provided the cordon while auxiliaries, Trawnikis, carried out the actual killing. Most importantly, he dedicates a chapter to the so-call "Jew Hunts", which he calls "a tenacious, remorseless, ongoing campaign in which the 'hunters' tracked down their 'prey' in direct and personal confrontation."⁸ Throughout, Browning stresses the individual actions of unit members: some participate reluctantly, some are eager volunteers, some abstain from shooting when given the chance, others shoot when not ordered. Still others grow increasingly sadistic the more they are exposed to the killing.⁹ No one is ever punished for failing to shoot.

Why did 80% of the men kill if they were neither hand-picked murderers nor forced to shoot? Browning concludes that careerism, peer pressure and conformity in deference to authority are the likely reasons why many chose to kill rather than fall out. Overall, he makes a persuasive case. He disproves self-selection while proving that the unit represented a cross-section of German society at the time. His most persuasive arguments are those relating to peer pressure — not

⁵ Ibid., p. 168.

⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

⁸ Ibid., p. 132.

⁹ Ibid., p. 188. Browning points to Lt. Gnade, who rushed his men back from Minsk to avoid participating in a shooting, only to descend into increasingly sadistic behaviour over time.

wanting to leave one's comrades with the "dirty work" — a point that will likely resonate with anyone who has served in a combat unit.¹⁰

The question of ideology is where the greatest weakness lies. Browning shows convincingly that the indoctrination material the men received while serving in the unit was pedestrian, at best. His thesis might have been better served if, earlier in the book, he had placed greater emphasis on the antisemitic climate that served to dehumanize their victims. While he does discuss this point, he does so only briefly in the conclusion. The title *Ordinary Men* leads to some ambiguity since without this contextual framing from the beginning; it sometimes reads as though he is arguing that any cross-section of men from any time or place could be capable of committing the same crimes. His use of the Milgram experiment seems to support of this appearance, since the experiment was designed to prove that ordinary Americans were capable of the same kind of complicity as Nazi war criminals.¹¹ It leaves his work somewhat vulnerable on the issue of ideology, and another author, Daniel Goldhagen, will zero in on this, though he will take his own argument to the extreme.

Hitler's Willing Executioners was written five years later in direct response to *Ordinary Men*. Goldhagen, a political scientist, boldly proclaims that "[e]xplaining why the Holocaust occurred requires a radical revision of what has until now been written. This book is that

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 184-185. Though anecdotal, having served in the infantry, I can attest to the power of peer pressure and not wanting to let your teammates down. Those who do not pull their weight with the tough jobs are labelled as "blades". The associated threat of ostracism is particularly menacing to anyone in direct combat unit. This is not to say that I would have shot non-combatants if ordered. I grew up in the wake of the Holocaust, in a society that does not aim to vilify other identity groups, and my military training included a review of military law that strictly forbade harming non-combatants (compare to the Barbarossa decree or the Commissar order). Today's members of the Canadian Forces have a system in place that obliges them to disobey illegal orders. The same cannot be said of the men of RPB101, though they still had the moral obligation to disobey. Some possessed the exceptional fortitude to do so, evidenced by the actions of Lt. Buchmann and a few others.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 173-174. The Milgram experiment was largely debunked for reasons that Browning discussed. He offers that the behaviour of the men from RPB101 show eerie similarities to the results of the experiment, but does not specify what those similarities are.

revision.”¹² For his part, Goldhagen does not contest Browning’s assertion that RPB101 represented a cross-section of the German population. In contrast, he argues that the men of RPB101, rather than succumbing to peer pressure or conformity, were enthusiastic killers infected with a strain of antisemitism that was both annihilationist and uniquely German. He relies on the same post-war testimonies that Browning had examined, as well as various other primary and second sources.

The first part of the book focuses on the derivation of his term “annihilationist antisemitism.” He then examines German institutions, all of which he argues had been converted for the purpose of destroying Jews. Only then do we arrive at a survey of RPB101’s actions in Poland. This is followed by investigation of the work camps and the death marches; the latter is used to undermine Browning’s arguments surrounding compliance.

Goldhagen’s thesis is hobbled from the beginning, especially in its attempt to prove the existence of annihilationist antisemitism. He claims that modern scholarship of German antisemitism is flawed because it infers that the antisemitism of the medieval period disappeared after the Enlightenment, only to flare up again during the interwar years, delivering the Nazis to power. He declares that the onus should be on scholars to prove that Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries was not “thoroughly antisemitic”¹³ (i.e. proving a negative). For this reason, he proposes using an anthropological method of tracing German antisemitism from its roots in early Christianity through to the Holocaust, claiming the existence of an unbroken line. This purported chain of causation requires several fantastical leaps. For example, Goldhagen bridges his argument, that medieval antisemitism metastasizes into racial antisemitism, using little more than

¹² Goldhagen, Daniel J., *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (New York: Knopf, 1996), p. 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

conjecture. Supplying no supporting sources, he posits that medieval Germans believed Jews to be agents of the Devil and that together they were responsible for all the ills of society.¹⁴ He then opines that medieval Germans never considered exterminating Jews because, as mere agents of the Devil, killing them would be futile as the primary source of evil, the Devil, would remain. He then argues that Enlightenment thinking removed the Devil from popular consciousness and all that remained were the Jews. With the Devil out of the equation, Germans were free to believe that eliminating the Jews would enable them to remove all the ills of society.¹⁵ This assertion, in the absence of any serious scholarship, strains credulity.

Goldhagen's flights of fancy do not end there. On multiple occasions, he clairvoyantly takes us into the minds of the perpetrators, often poetically, in an attempt to paint them as a homogenous cohort of sadists. The following, an attempt to penetrate the minds of the killers as they walked their victims to the shooting pits, illustrates this:

Walking side by side with his victim, [the German] was able to *imbue* the human form beside him with the projections of his mind. Some of the Germans, of course, had children walking beside them. It is highly likely that, back in Germany, these men had previously walked through woods with their own children by their sides, *marching gaily and inquisitively along*.¹⁶ [emphasis mine]

The above is an emotional appeal which takes us away from the sources and puts us at the mercy of the writer's imagination. It is a manipulative technique that has no place in modern scholarship.

It is evident from his earliest chapters that Goldhagen's research is more a contrivance than an honest approach to investigation. For this reason, it is difficult to weigh the substance of his arguments because, despite the anthropological methodology he purports to use, his actual method involves overwhelming the reader with a litany of examples to demonstrate the extent of

¹⁴ This is not an unrealistic argument. One only needs read Martin Luther's *On Jews and their Lies* to find evidence that some medieval and early modern Christians might have believed a connection between Jews and the Devil.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

antisemitism in Germany or the sadism of the men of RPB101. While the volume of specific examples appears to lend weight to his arguments, it is in fact a Potemkin Village. Evidence of Goldhagen's selectivity undermines any argument that he has provided a balance, fair and true view of the principles. An exhaustive explanation would require a whole other book, so this paper will focus on the most egregious examples.

Goldhagen asserts that German antisemitism originates from Christianity, a religion whose fundamentals, he claims, are itself rooted in antisemitism. To prove this, he employs a technique that he uses deceptively throughout the work — the fallacy of composition. Goldhagen focuses on the antisemitic homilies of a “pivotal Church Father.”¹⁷ Goldhagen is not referring to Augustine of Hippo, Jerome, Ambrose of Milan, or any of the luminaries of church doctrine in the west. Instead, he cites John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (a fact Goldhagen omits), who, while venerated by both Catholic and Protestant churches, was far more influential in the foundation of the Greek Orthodox Church, which exerted little influence upon German-speaking lands. Now to be sure, there are numerous examples of antisemitic teachings, pogroms and atrocities perpetrated by Christians in the west, but Goldhagen locks in on the one “Church Father” with a large corpus of antisemitic work and uses him as an exemplar of Christianity's alleged antisemitic foundation. Goldhagen does little to improve his credibility, as his selectivity of sources becomes especially pronounced when overlaid with Browning's work.

In the afterword of *Ordinary Men*, Browning highlights a number of instances where Goldhagen manipulates sources and omits crucial information.¹⁸ Browning discusses how Major Trapp, the unit's commander, was observed weeping by a number of his subordinates after he had given his orders to commence the massacre at Józefów. This fact, Browning astutely notes, is left

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁸ Browning, pp. 212-217.

out by Goldhagen because it would undermine the latter's narrative of a unit of "convivial"¹⁹ killers. Surprisingly, Browning fails to mention the most clear-cut example of selectivity by Goldhagen involving Major Trapp. Browning relates how shortly after Jósefów, RPB101 is tasked with rounding up and shooting the Jews of Alekzandrów. Sensing the depressed spirit of his men, Trapp orders the Jews back to their homes instead of killing them. Goldhagen attempts to explain the depressed spirit of the men using the less-than-convincing argument that can be summed up as the men being upset about getting blood on their uniforms,²⁰ but nowhere does he discuss the events at Alekzandrów. Given that *Willing Executioners* is a virtual line-by-line refutation of *Ordinary Men*, this cannot be an unconscious omission. Alekzandrów is one of the strongest examples of the unit's action that undermines his thesis that the men of RPB101 are, to a man, eager murderers. This omission is a vivid example of Goldhagen's selectivity in furtherance of an agenda. In doing so, Goldhagen impeaches his own work as serious scholarship; relegating it to a case study in the perils of manipulating sources. It has little value otherwise. And what of his argument that the violent antisemitism of the Holocaust was uniquely German? Jan Gross's 2001 book *Neighbors* shows that such an argument is untenable.

Jan T. Gross's 2001 book *Neighbors* sheds light onto an altogether different perpetrator. While the Germans were enjoying the earlier successes of Operation Barbarossa, some Polish civilians were turning on their Jewish neighbours with particular viciousness. Using post-war testimonies and indictments, Gross exposes a tragedy where half of the people of Jedwabne murdered the other half. He argues that the histories of the Jews and non-Jewish Poles should be studied as one and that, while the Soviet and subsequent Nazi occupations "mediated" the relations between these populations, the crimes perpetrated upon the Jewish population were done

¹⁹ Goldhagen, p. 247.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 221.

autonomously.²¹ He skillfully proves this by mining the testimonies for information which he then uses to build a convincing picture of the tensions that existed between the Jews and their neighbours before, during and after the war.

Gross uses a simple structure to build his case. He begins with a deposition. On July 23, 1941, the Jews of the Jedwabne are rounded up by their fellow townsfolk. They are humiliated and beaten; sporadic murder become systemized when they are forced into a barn that is then burned down around them. Gross then provides context of life before the war, followed by a brief description of life under the Soviets, and finally under Nazi occupation. With the context established, he attempts to recreate the details of the massacre and reveal possible motives, all with an eye to how these events fit into the narrative of Polish-Jewish relations. What he uncovers is startling. Gross demonstrates an animus toward the Jews that pre-dates Nazi occupation. While the way in which the Jews of Jedwabne are humiliated during the pogrom — forced to wave red banners, sing songs how they started the war, being forced to bury a statue of Lenin²² — suggests a retaliation for a complicity with the Soviets, Gross reveals a deeper prejudice, one predicated upon much a much older hatred.

Gross is most convincing in the latter half of the book where he describes post-war Polish-Jewish relations. While discussing his methodology, Gross proves conclusively that post-war proceedings were not the typical show-trials that were pervasive in Eastern Europe under Stalin, since the trials were done in great haste and without much publicity.²³ This, Gross argues, is evidence that the Poles were still not willing to come to grips with the crimes of their countrymen. The best example is that those Polish heroes who had protected Jews had to hide that fact in the

²¹ Gross, Jan T., *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. xviii-xix.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

years after the war for fear of reprisal.²⁴ Even more shocking is the case of the workers who went on strike over publications denouncing a post-war pogrom in Kielce that resulted in the death of 42 Jews.²⁵ Thus, by demonstrating a clear line of antisemitic tension, “rooted in medieval prejudice about ritual murder”,²⁶ which runs from before to after the war, Gross firmly establishes that the massacre at Jedwabne, a thread in that line, should be seen within the context of the complicated Polish-Jewish tapestry.

In the end, Gross turns to the motives of the perpetrators. Greed and self-interest, couched in antisemitism appear to be the two main culprit. He uses the petitions for clemency, submitted by those perpetrators of the Jedwabne massacre brought justice in 1949, to show that many of the most vicious participants had been NKVD informants during the Soviet occupation.²⁷ It comes as a rich irony given the pretext for the massacre, that the Jews had been agents of the Red Army.²⁸ He argues that these men might have worried about their Soviet-sympathetic pasts being uncovered by the Nazis, so they responded by signaling an overzealous sadism during the massacre at Jedwabne.²⁹ Gross then argues that the antisemitism, along with the self-interest which made prompted these men to kill, also made those areas of Poland more susceptible to Sovietization.³⁰

One criticism of Gross’s work relates to his chapter on sources. Gross argues that, because of their paucity, we should accept survivor testimony as true until it can be proven otherwise.³¹ Similar to Goldhagen’s argument about 18th and 19th century antisemitism, this is reversing the onus and placing an undo burden toward proving a negative. This is perhaps why Gross chose to

²⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁷ Ibid., pp.71-73.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 111.

³¹ Ibid., p. 92.

include, in full, the testimony provided by Menachem Finkelsztajn³² regarding the massacre of Jews from the town of Radziłów, which is suspect due to its overly emotive language and digressions into editorialization that conveys developed themes. These minor points notwithstanding, Gross's arguments are well-constructed and persuasive. Unlike *Willing Executioners*, there is a touching humility about *Neighbors*. Gross admits that it is just a starting point in understanding Jewish-Polish relations and expresses hope that others will carry the scholarship forward.³³

These three books taken together tell us much about the impact of war on relations between different groups. The war of annihilation in the east provided the perfect laboratory to mix old hatreds with individual motives. In all three, we learn that ordinary people, inured by cultures of fear and hate, kill out of greed, conformity, and self-interest. Goldhagen, an intentionalist to the extreme, makes the case that the war was only an accelerant to an ongoing program of annihilation of the Jews. He argues unconvincingly that the pre-war concentration camps were annihilationist.³⁴ Browning and Gross are correct to point out that, but for the war, none of the perpetrators would have likely killed. As Gross says so eloquently in his opening:

People subject to Stalin's or Hitler's rule were repeatedly set against each other and encouraged to act on the basest instincts of mutual dislike. Every conceivable cleavage in society was eventually exploited, every antagonism exacerbated.³⁵

Browning and Gross, however, both offer glimmers of hope in that there were exceptional people who dissented, evaded or defied the rules. Some chose not to kill; others chose to hide and protect the hunted; still others bore witness. This is the strength of both Browning and Gross's works: they present a spectrum of behavior and allow for the individual. Goldhagen, by contrast,

³² Ibid., pp. 32-40.

³³ Ibid., p. 124.

³⁴ Goldhagen, p. 170-173.

³⁵ Gross, p. xv.

portrays the German people as monolithic force bent on a single murderous goal. Ironically, the Nazis used this same technique in their publications to elicit hatred for the Jews.³⁶ All three books are a reminder that we must eschew the urge to attribute single motives to large groups. They demonstrate why we should always be wary of demagogues who try to divide us with fear, whether it be demonizing groups of migrants as criminals and rapist hordes or wagging their finger at nebulous oppressors.

And lest we comfort ourselves with the knowledge the last of these ordinary men are now in their nineties and soon to be extinct, that their deeds will be safely entombed in books or on film, never to harm again, let us remember that we do not have to look back far in time for examples of hateful violence. A month ago, a man who trumpeted Nazi canards about the Jews on social media entered a Pittsburgh synagogue and gunned down eleven people. Had the shooting happened minutes later, it might have killed a man who had survived ten months in a concentration camp.³⁷ It is a vivid reminder that while Third Reich has long disappeared, the kind of fear and anger that led to its ascent still lurks not far beneath the surface of everyday life.

³⁶ *Der Stürmer* also selected specific kernels of truth to vilify a group. Its editors had contacts within the Gestapo who would alert them whenever a Jew was charged with a serious crime. *Der Stürmer* bombarded its readership with a regular list of crimes committed by Jews, especially sex offences, since this furthered the narrative that Jews were synonymous with murder, fraud, and perversion. Naturally, the same technique can be used against any identity group since criminality can be found within any large population. For more, see Bytwerk, Randall L., *Julius Streicher* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1983).

³⁷ "I'm Alive! He Survived the Holocaust, and Then the Massacre At the Synagogue", Sara Sidner - <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/30/us/holocaust-survivor-pittsburgh/index.html>.

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2. Goldhagen, Daniel J., *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (New York: Knopf, 1996)
3. Gross, Jan T., *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 2001)