

Institute of National Remembrance

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The IPN Launches its Reply to the Authors of "Night without an End"

On 14 September 2020 the Institute of National Remembrance launched the publication entitled "Korekty ciąg dalszy" ["Correction continued"]. It is Tomasz Domański's reply to the comments and allegations contained in the responses by the editors and authors of "Night without an End" to Domański's review of it.



Tomasz Domański examined the work, subtitled and claiming to present true "fate of Jews in selected counties of occupied Poland" in a text subtitled and containing "*some reflections on the use of sources in Night without an End*" – because it is the treatment of sources by its authors that he identified as the fundamental reason for the book's flaws and outright falsehoods. One might think that one scholar pointing out another's errors would have ended the matter there and then and lead to putting the text right, but it was not the case here.

The authors 'and editors' reactions to Domański's reviews mostly boiled down to a personal attack on this researcher who had "dared" to write a critical review. Here are some examples: The review was called an "wordy essay" (B. Engelking), an "essay" (D. Swałtek-Niewińska), a "treatise" and "Potemkin village" (T. Frydel) or even a "riposte"(A. Skibińska). According to Prof. Barbara Engelking, the review is "a screed having the character of a libel"; or, as Prof. Dariusz Libionka put it: "a commissioned study, aimed at [...] discrediting and ridiculing editors and authors of texts, showing them as ignoramuses, swindlers and manipulators, as well as crooks who, only by means known to themselves, receive funds for their regrettable creativity hostile to all from the point of view of the interests of the state ".

In the responses formulated by the authors of *Night without an End* there were a number of accusations against both the Institute of National Remembrance and the author of the review himself. These accusations could not remain unanswered.

The Deputy President of the Institute of National Remembrance,

Mateusz Szpytma, Ph.D., remarked on the reaction of the authors of *Night without an End* to the extensive review authored by Tomasz Domański, Ph.D., entitled *Correcting the Picture?* "In my opinion, when we are looking back years from now, this polemic will surely be considered as one of the most important points of the discussion on Polish-Jewish relations during German occupation (...) We must remember that without the participation of the Germans, without their plan of extermination and its implementation, no Jews would have been murdered, nor would there have been any need to help them," emphasized President Mateusz Szpytma.

The new book is a continuation of the investigation by Domański in the area of analysis and interpretation of archival sources presented in *Night without an End*. In this review, the author quotes and discusses examples of over-interpretation (also in the area of commenting on existing literature), falsifications or the lack of a critical approach to the source material and building further myths and groundless theses on this basis. The new findings by Domański confirm and reinforce his final observations contained in *Correcting the Picture*: "Many of the phenomena and events mentioned should be described anew, taking into account the realities of the occupation and a thorough analysis of the sources".

"After the online publication of the comments made by the authors of *Night without an End* to *Correcting the Picture?*, the Institute of Sociology and Philosophy of the Polish Academy of Sciences offered to publish Domański's reply. The IPN agreed to the proposal, but during

the talks, the Polish Center for Holocaust Research withdrew its proposal and the publication finally did not take place,” said Mateusz Szpytma.

Deputy President Szpytma went on to present selected publications of the Institute of National Remembrance in the field of research on the extermination of Jews in Poland. He emphasised the important role such publications play in the Institute's activities.

Tomasz Domański, P.D., the author of the review, presented the second part of it, which as a separate brochure entitled *Correction Continued* was attached to the September "Bulletin of the Institute of National Remembrance". In the introductory part of the text, Domański discussed, inter alia, the issues of selection of research areas and the sources of statistical data, pointing to serious inaccuracies in both respects. In addition, according to Domański, the term "German-Polish administration" is hardly relevant in the context of Polish occupational reality.

"Figures constitute a very important element of the polemic. In the book *Night without an End* there appear many statistics concerning the number of Jews who survived the Holocaust and those who were killed by the Germans and Poles. Many tables lack the source, so it is difficult to verify this data. The authors of *Night without an End* analyzed archival materials inappropriately. It is difficult to treat some fragments of [PAN publications] differently (...); specific phrases, sentences, elements are omitted in the text, they do not exist in the book, and yet, they would significantly affect both the understanding of a given

document and the understanding of the event (...) The entire book is written with complete disregard for presenting sources, which applies to both editors and co-authors of the publication,” said Tomasz Domański.

In the detailed part of *Correction Continued*, Domański responds to specific allegations of all authors and editors of the book *Night without and End*.

“I can see the same elements that I have seen before, i.e. over-interpretation, lack of reliable analysis of sources and documents and building groundless theses and conclusions on this basis,” summed up the author of the review during the briefing.

Tomasz Domański's replies:

The issue of statistical data:

It is not that I disregard the data presented by the authors. I am, however, not taking up any discussion on the calculations presented in their book for reasons which I have already mentioned in *Correcting the Picture*. Data presented without any source reference are simply unverifiable, making it impossible to analyze their credibility or examine the accuracy of the calculations in any way. The authors must be made fully aware of this. To enable polemics, specific sources or names of those Jews whose fate was used to compile the statistics ought to have been listed. This is essential if such materials are to

aspire to the role of scientific data. In such an extensive work, in which the perpetrators of crimes against Jews have seemingly been meticulously enumerated, it gives the impression of deliberately preventing the scientific verification of these types of calculations”.

The issue of the choice of research areas:

"The words about comparing the extermination policy towards Jews as a determinant of the selection of research areas sound very unreliable if we take into account that four out of the nine" "counties" selected for analysis were, in fact, located within one district (Cracow). Thus, the whole analyzed area did not actually cover "different regions of Poland", but various regions of the General Government (and one "county" of Bezirk Bialystok). Individual regional studies do bring important considerations on the course of the Holocaust, but almost exclusively (except Bielsko-Biała) within one administrative area. In this respect, Zapalec's statement is unfounded: "If the reviewer believes that a 'well-thought-through exemplification', 'ensuring that the choice is representative' is possible, he should not hide it from the readers; I would like to know his standpoint on this issue" (answer, p. 3), and further: "Domański, on the other hand, could not contribute anything creative and constructive to the discussion, so he went on to criticize the authors of the book, instead". (answer, p. 3).

A similar opinion was expressed by Dagmara Swańtek-Niewińska, for whom my comments regarding the lack of representativeness of research areas result from "a certain ignorance of the principles governing both statistics and the selection of research groups"

(answer, p. 1). Anna Zapalec seems to have forgotten that it is not the role of a reviewer to act as the editor of a volume and to point out specific counties, and maybe even communes, which the authors should have analyzed. What is clearly noticeable in the comments of both authors is a considerable amount of ill will and reluctance, as they appear to have missed the following fragment of the review: "With the exception of Żłoczów 'county', almost all of Poland's eastern pre-war territories are not represented. All of Radom District (one of the five administrative units of the GG) and the

Polish territories annexed to the Reich have also been left out. An experienced Holocaust scholar is well aware that the Holocaust had different distinctive features in each of these regions and that a different social hierarchy of the conquered peoples existed there (e.g. Radom District had the biggest number of Jewish industrial workers in the GG)" (*Correcting the Picture*, p. 7). This is where I would search for "well-thought-through exemplification". Usually, also in scientific publications or those aspiring to such, the comparative analysis of administrative units from different historical periods, having a different territorial scope and organizational structure, and additionally the same name, is not carried out because it would inevitably lead to confusion, only imitating research coherence.'

An extract from Tomasz Domański's reply to Dariusz Libionka:

The author of "The Miechów County" roars – to reflect the tone he uses – that, addressing the issue of sheltering Jews by Aleksander Kisiel and the searches for the hidden, I reproached him as follows, " Of course it

was irrelevant for the outcome of the search whether the Germans were alone or accompanied by their “Blue” Police subordinates, but it is not a norm in academia to make such additions to sources.”

(*Correcting the Picture*, p. 46). I must admit that Libionka's explanations of how the “Blue” policemen appeared in the quoted source baffled me: in his reply, he listed the Polnische Polizei (PP) stations in the area to make the presence of the officers in Kisiel's buildings more likely, and then concluded, “It was not my intention to correct the sources. Kisiel's account, like most reports in Fond 301 at the Jewish Historical Institute, was recorded by a clerk, and can't be taken literally.” (Libionka's reply, p. 6). What Libionka seems to be saying is, “Kisiel does not mention the “Blue” policemen? So what? There were PP stations nearby, so they could have been there.” They certainly could, but thinking in terms, “if something does not agree with the source, then so much the worse for the source,” is not the best of explanations. I am not sure whether Professor Libionka is fully aware of the meaning of his own words, because following his approach to written records, all testimonies, reports and interrogation protocols, as well as the quotations derived from them should be dismissed as nothing else than a form of an office record (made by a clerk), which “can't be taken literally”. Such an extraordinary paradigm would make it possible to question all scientific research, including that of Professor Libionka, and, hopefully, that's not what he meant. Yes, a researcher can alert the reader that the wording of the interrogation reports ought to be treated with caution – if the interrogators used torture, beatings or coercion, or the interrogated person had no influence on the accuracy the testimony was recorded with. Such

caution must be applied when analyzing the files of the "August trials" (which, by the way, were extensively used in *Night without an End*, also by Libionka himself). However, the author can't be suggesting that the testimonies collected by the Jewish Historical Institute were obtained in such a way.

Domański reveals more examples of scientific over-interpretation by the book editor, Professor Grabowski:

It is also worth devoting some space to the memoirs of the "local prosecutor", as they may be another example of the way in which Jan Grabowski uses materials already published. To understand this mechanism better, one needs to refer to fragments of Andrew Kornbluth's article, because it was this researcher who found the memories of Władysław Grzymała ("local prosecutor") from Siedlce. Fragments of Kornbluth's text were, as it can be assumed, the basis for Grabowski's probing into the nature of the judiciary at that time, which he included in *Night Without an End*. The phrase "can be assumed" is most appropriate here, because Grabowski, using Grzymała's memoirs, only once directly refers to Kornbluth's article in a footnote, and deprives the remainder of his argument of any reference (*Night Without an End*, vol. 1, p. 457). Since, as I mentioned, Grabowski does not indicate any other sources, I assume that the entire description was taken from Kornbluth, who described the aforementioned lawyer as follows, "Władysław Grzymała, a prosecutor working at the court in Siedlce since his university graduation in 1934, in unpublished memoirs revealed his hatred towards communists, asserting that

before the war ‘most’ of his colleagues sympathized with National Democracy – a party that was deeply nationalist, anti-Semitic and far-right. At a 1948 meeting with fifty other prosecutors from all over Poland, he noted that they all belonged to the ‘generation of pre-war graduates, and were of the political affiliation represented chiefly by Roman Dmowski, [Roman] Rybarski, [Stanisław] Stroński, and therefore supporters of the national-radical camp’”. It can only be concluded from Kornbluth's text that **Grzymała's colleagues** belonged to or sympathized with the National Democratic Party, and that he introduced himself as an anti-communist. Yet, Grabowski's portrayal of the prosecutor, based on the quoted excerpt, goes as follows: “Grzymała, a prosecutor with pre-war experience, an **ardent supporter of the National Democratic Party**, did not hide his political views [emphasis added].” (*Night Without an End*, vol. 1, p. 457). Is this a fair use of another author's text?

When drawing conclusions regarding Grzymała's proceedings against people charged with crimes against Jews, Grabowski treats the original source even more casually. The text published by Kornbluth reads: “Grzymała's attitude to the prosecution of crimes against Jews was, to put it mildly, unenthusiastic. He wrote that the Poles persecuting Jews were just ‘few exceptions’, that ‘honest Jews, as less resourceful, died’ and only ‘scum’ survived who now craved revenge against Poland and the Poles. **Consequently, he mentions working in collusion with judges to drop the charges against those of the defendants whose guilt he wasn't certain of** [emphasis added].” And here's how Grabowski reconstructs this passage, “He [Grzymała] did not deny

that the cases of the Poles charged with murdering Jews were not, to put it mildly, a priority for the judges. On the contrary, the Siedlce prosecutor wrote that among the Jews "the honest ones died out", and what remained was just "scum craving to get back at the Poles". **For this reason, wishing to protect the Poles accused of murdering Jews, judges and prosecutors collaborated in order to drop the most serious charges'.**"[emphasis added] (*Night Without an End*, vol. 1, p. 457).

*The book has yet to be released in English, but its English-language title appearing here is the one used by the publisher.

Catalogue of the IPN publications on the extermination of Jews and Polish-Jewish relations during WWII:

<https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/publikacje/katalog-publicacji/85062,The-Holocaust-and-Polish-Jewish-relations-during-the-Second-World-War-Publicatio.html>

The full English version of *Correcting the Picture? Some Reflections on the Use of Sources in Night without an End. Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland* will appear soon in the latest issue of *Polish – Jewish Studies*.

Downloads

[Correcting the Picture - Polish language version \(pdf, 1.88 MB\)](#)

[Correction Continued - Polish language version \(pdf, 1.11 MB\)](#)

[Correcting the Picture - German language version \(pdf, 1014.83 KB\)](#)

[Correcting the Picture - French language version \(pdf, 982.37 KB\)](#)

[Correcting the Picture - English language version \(excerpt\) \(pdf, 150.45 KB\)](#)

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