



### Response to Siegmund-Schultze Review

The critical September 2015 *Notices* review of my new book “The Scholar and the State” by Reinhard Siegmund-Schultze (henceforth S-S) contradicted his decade of enthusiastic comments on all my publications about Van der Waerden (VdW). S-S desires German monopoly, but his pro-German prejudice produces insensitivity: “After the collapse of the Hitler regime in 1945, embittered émigrés and traumatized Dutch compatriots, mostly politicians and students rather than colleagues, attacked VdW for having stayed in Nazi Germany.” To the injury of embittered émigrés and the Dutch traumatized by a brutal five-year occupation, S-S adds the insult of dismissing victims’ views! There are numerous countries that have personal interests in researching the horrific World War II waged by Germany against humanity. The interest is personal: tens of millions of dead bodies of Jews, Russians, Polish, Dutch, Belgians, Norwegians, Danish, Africans, Americans, and other peoples who demand the truth in the loudest way—the silent way. The French anti-Fascist Jean Galtier-Boissière reformulated S-S’s desire as follows: “Give me your watch and I’ll tell you the time.” Shall we trust S-S to tell us the true time? (Details at [geombina.uccs.edu/?page\\_id=1482](http://geombina.uccs.edu/?page_id=1482)).

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### Response to Soifer

Both in my review and in personal communications to the author I have tried to be fair and encouraging, and critical at the same time. I tried

to make clear that a nuanced political biography requires more than emotions and more than amassing material without being sufficiently prepared to analyze it, due to, above all, linguistic deficiencies. An outsider’s look at a national culture often sharpens the perspective. Excellent examples are Karen Parshall’s biography of the English mathematician J. J. Sylvester, Mark Walker’s account of the German Nazi project of the “Uranium machine” and Werner Heisenberg’s role in it, and the wide-ranging work on Germany history by Neil MacGregor, the director of the British Museum who has recently been appointed as the artistic director of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. In each case the historian has been personally immersed for many years in the respective foreign culture.

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### An Apology to Galois

What I called a “flaw” in Galois’s key Proposition 1 of the First Memoir in my article “Galois for 20th Century Readers” [*Notices*, vol. 59, no. 7 (August, 2012) 912–923] turns out to be a flaw not in Galois’s proposition but in my interpretation of it. Steeped in the modern form of Galois theory, I based my presentation on an unconscious assumption that the essence of the proposition was to describe the Galois group as a subgroup of the group of permutations of the roots. As Benjamin Blum-Smith showed me, Galois had a different—and clearly stated—objective and, as I hope my discussion of Galois’s construction showed, proved his proposition very satisfactorily.

The object of my article was to make Galois’s memoir accessible to present day readers, not to replace it. My misstep shows once again the advantage of reading the masters (Galois), not the pupils (me).

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