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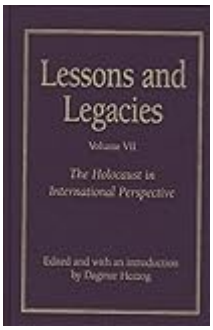

Dagmar Herzog, ed. *Lessons and Legacies VII: The Holocaust in International Perspective.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006. 430 pp. $34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8101-2371-7; $89.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8101-2370-0.

Reviewed by Anna Hájková (Department of History, University of Toronto)

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An Increasingly Globalized Approach to the Holocaust

"Lessons and Legacies" is widely acknowledged to be the central academic conference for Holocaust study and research. Organized by Theodore Zev Weiss, head of the Holocaust Education Foundation, the conference takes place biannually and the volume at hand is the result of the 2002 conference held at the University of Minneapolis and directed by Dagmar Herzog. Since the conference serves as a platform for all aspects of Holocaust history, the volume collects essays covering a broad variety of themes. The book offers an outstanding overview of current research, providing the reader with a quick summary of current topics at a high level of scholarship.

As the book consists of twenty-seven short essays, in the following I shall discuss in greater detail two sections of papers: those dealing with greed and the search for political advantage as motivations for violence against the Jews and those addressing gender issues. Both are highly charged issues that have been intensely discussed in the past few years.

Jan Gross analyses antisemitism in postwar Poland and looks closely at the conditions in which it worked and the factors behind its rise. As Gross argues in his earlier study *Neighbors* (2001), anti-Jewish violence during WWII was sometimes initiated and organized by Poles rather than by Germans. The postwar era brought returning survivors and Soviet influence. Gross analyses numerous examples of repulsive antisemitic outbursts, to which the Polish government reacted only reluctantly. The new communist regime had to offer something that would make the communist ideology easier to embrace in order to be accepted by the population. This was the acceptance of antisemitism, or rather crude nationalism, a feature we find in other central European countries as well (p. 81). Indeed, many Polish collaborators were forgiven and accepted into the communist community. These people were instrumental in the creation of Soviet influence. The argument is remarkable in that it challenges the old idea that it was the Jews who had a special affiliation for leftist views and thus brought their home countries under communist influence. Gross presents heartbreaking evidence; his is an emotional piece crying for justice. His explanation is daring, but the argument requires additional evidence of the communist leadership's explicit awareness of the deal, as noted by Piotr WrÃ³bel in his re-assessment of *Neighbors* (p. 394).

Jonathan Petropoulos and Frank Bajohr discuss avarice as a factor in the isolation and general persecution of the Jewish population under National Socialism. Their essays contradict Yehuda Bauer, according to whom "robbery was the outcome of the Holocaust, not its cause" (quoted on p. 30). Both authors show how extremely different groups participated in and initiated plunder. Petropoulos cites an older piece by JÃ¶rg Friedrich arguing that that there is a connection between robbing a person and then taking his life (p. 34). Bajohr examines in his essay the connection between racism, material gain, and absolute power. He moves beyond a description of robbery to offer a more general outline of the power relationships and mentalities behind theft, including the thesis that the Nazi party, lacking in moral values, had little to offer other than material benefits (p. 46). The profiteers, who took advantage of this, whether on a large or small scale, did so hastily, corruptly, and in competition. Bajohr explains corruption as a typical structural problem of dictatorships. Indeed, the author offers a new sketch of the NSDAP: the Nazi functionaries were a gang-like community with neo-feudal features rather than bureaucratic machinery (p. 44). Bajohr's and Petroupolos's results are conceptually framed, innovative, and most importantly, convincing.

Doris Bergen, Christa Schikorra, Rochelle Saidel, and Patricia Szobar focus on the long neglected and highly charged topic of gender in general and sexual violence in particular. Schikorra examines the difficult phenomenon of camp brothel, arguing that we should consider forced prostitution a form of forced labor. She shows how postwar society constructed a link between the presumed pre-deportation history of the forced prostitutes and their "lower-class" status and "promiscuity," thus enabling their further marginalization. Although recent research has shown that one of the sources Schikorra uses is a falsification,[1] this problem does not lessen the impact of her sobering and lucid conclusion, which reveals much about the continuity of exclusion.[2] Saidel's piece on Jewish women in RavensbrÃ¼ck is unfortunately not nearly as impressive. She neglects the entire current and very rich research on RavensbrÃ¼ck, most unfortunately the work of Linde Apel on the same topic. Also of concern are numerous factual mistakes, including an outdated estimate of the prisoner's numbers (p. 203). Moreover, her failure to discuss the exact influence of the double axes of persecution is troubling: these prisoners were both Jewish and female. Instead, she summarizes results of fifteen-year-old scholarship (p. 209ff) and the informed reader finds little by way of original findings.[3]

Szobar's essay discusses the *Rassenschande* trials and the gender roles they created. These trials started after the introduction of the Nuremberg race laws, prosecuting intimate relationships between non-Jews and Jews. The trials were always directed against the male accused, irrespective of their "race": the women appeared as witnesses and were not sentenced, although Jewish female partners were usually sent to concentration camps and after 1938 to RavensbrÃ¼ck.[4] Szobar comes to conclusions similar to those of Alexandra Przyrembel in her seminal book on this topic, arguing that many denunciations were motivated by misogynism and that the trials stressed the sexual and deviant character of the relationships. Szobar delivers a new interpretation of the latter, arguing that the sexualization of victims functioned for their dehumanization and that this pattern of censure must have been based on existing societal traditions.

Bergen, in her conceptual piece, analyzes the function and meaning of sexual violence in the Holocaust. She demonstrates that sexual violence served as a tool to strip formerly socially protected groups, such as women and children, of their human dignity. Inhibitions against killing were lowered as the victims ceased to be categorized as fellow human beings. In short, sexual violence helped reinforce hierarchies between social groups. One condition for this function of sexual violence was the coexistence of normal, sanctioned sexual life with its functions of intimacy, reproduction, and affirmation. Because perpetrators still were able to live intimately with their partners, they were able to believe they had remained decent human beings. Thus sexuality bore a double meaning, dependent on with whom one had sexual relations and, correspondingly, the form. Laudably, Bergen includes in her analysis other victim groups such as Slavs, homosexuals, and Roma. Moreover, she discusses violence against men as well, which enables her to draw more general conclusions. Lucidly written, tightly argued, and well thought-through, her piece is a major contribution regarding the interplay of gender, race, and hierarchical power relationships, which are inherent to genocidal situations.

Although the conference was not organized with a central objective, several points of convergence emerge from reading the essays. The authors oppose a black and white vision of history. They stress the complexity, multiple factors, and interdependence of the events. Furthermore they show how human and "normal" both the victims and perpetrators were. The articles in the gender section demonstrate how sexual violence influenced the ascription of hierarchical value: sexualization, whether

by use of physical violence or exposure at a *Rassenschande* trial, leads to devaluation and injury of personal identity. Comparable conclusions can be drawn from the section on avarice: marking people as free to strip of property is another form of dehumanization. These processes and others were necessary to mark a group as different and inferior, a basic step towards its annihilation. The essays in this volume research the Holocaust in the framework of society, everyday interactions, values, and also the history of mentalities, thus moving away from the old framework of politics, antisemitism, and SS thought as a black box.

On a more general note, research projects or books lie behind many of the essays in the volume, which has an impact on the form, so that empirical archival evidence is scarcely included. On one hand, this character improves the book's readability and intensifies its nature as an overview character; on the other, a specialized audience will have to pursue the authors' closer elaborations elsewhere. Apart from the articles by Gross and WrÃ³bel, the volume does not discuss any scholarly controversies. The volume is appropriately subtitled "Holocaust in International Perspective." The growing body of Holocaust research is still somewhat split into the North American and European/German camps. The volume at hand demonstrates vividly via contributions from both sides of the Atlantic how much scholarship can benefit from bridging these gaps and referring to other countries' scholarly findings and interpretations. To sum up, the volume at hand offers an outstanding overview of current trends in Holocaust scholarship, in brief form and generally eloquently written. It also encourages the reader to anticipate the upcoming 2008 volume, to be edited by Doris Bergen. Apart from the essays mentioned, contributions are also included from Gerard Aalders, Michael Thad Allen, Harvey Asher, Omer Bartov, Suzanne Brown-Fleming, Martin Dean, Christian Delage, Lawrence Douglas, Rebecca Golbert, Jeffrey Herff, Stuart Liebman, Juergen Matthaeus, Thomas Pegelow, Gavriel Rosenfeld, James Waller, Bob Weinberg, Theodore Zev Weiss, and Edward Westermann.

Notes

[1]. Christa Paul und Robert Sommer, "SS-Bordelle und Oral History. Problematische Quellen und die Existenz von Bordellen fÃ¼r die SS in Konzentrationslagern," *BIOS* 1 (2006), 124-142.

[2]. Among others, a continuity can be found to the difficulty found by subsequent authorities in accepting sexual violence as a crime against humanity or a reason for granting asylum.

[3]. Cf. Joachim Neander, "Review of Rochelle G. Saidel, *The Jewish Women of RavensbrÃ¼ck Concentration Camp*," *German Studies Review* XXVIII (2005), pp. 665ff. See also James Konecke. "Review of Rochelle G. Saidel, *The Jewish Women of RavensbrÃ¼ck Concentration Camp*," H-German, H-Net Reviews, February, 2005. URL: `http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=214621116960538`, and Saidel's reply in the H-German logs.

[4]. Alexandra Przyrembel, *"Rassenschande". Reinheitsmythos und Vernichtungslegitimation im Nationalsozialismus* (GÃ¶ttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 283.

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