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Ruth Gay. *Safe Among the Germans: Liberated Jews After World War II.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002. xiv + 347 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-09271-4.

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This book provides an eminently readable introduction to the subject of Jewish life in Germany after the Holocaust, a topic which has recently gained increased attention, both from scholars and from the wider public. It focuses primarily on the community's transition to stability after the immediate postwar months and years, when most Jews in Germany were eastern European survivors of the concentration camps. While most of these victims of National Socialist persecution emigrated to Israel upon that state's creation, a significant minority chose to remain in Germany, and they joined the remnant of prewar German Jewry, to form the Jewish community that existed in Germany with little demographic alteration until 1990.

In her Introduction, Gay sketches out the basics actors in the milieu she depicts: eastern European Jews in displaced persons (DP) camps, who maintained the dying glow of Yiddish culture as they awaited a new life in Palestine, and German Jews, who struggled to find a place in a beloved homeland, which had rejected them. As she points out, their new community soon characterized itself not as "German Jews," but rather as "Jews in Germany" (p. xiii). Gay does not explain her choice of title, *Safe among the Germans*. However, she does note that many Jews around the world opposed any re-establishment of communities by their co-religionists in Germany. It is possible that they perceived the situation as fundamentally unsafe, but with this book, Gay wishes to honor the highly successful and stable community that has emerged against great odds since 1945.

She opens with a chapter on the origins of the Jews coming from Germany immediately after liberation, and the challenges they faced. Most were eastern Europeans from small towns and great cities, like Warsaw and Czernowitz. A smaller group had grown up in Germany but was descended from earlier immigrants from the East. While their citizenship differed, Gay claims that their Jewish identity had always been primary: "But whatever their rank, Jews did not fit into the world in which they had been born [...] These Jews expected to be lifelong strangers" (p. 5). These Jews were already alienated from their eastern European roots before the National Socialists extirpated them from these lands, she asserts. As background, she gives the reader a whirlwind tour of central and eastern European nationalism, antisemitism, anti-Jewish persecution, Zionism, and Jewish cultural renaissance before addressing the heart of her examination.

In the following two chapters, the reader encounters the survivors of Hitler's concentration camps and persecution. Eastern European Jews who had little desire to return home and nowhere else to go made a temporary home in Germany. They engaged in the struggle to open up British-occupied Palestine for Jewish settlement; but in this, they were stymied until the establishment of Israel. Gay's depiction of the DPs' lives and social circumstances is a highlight of the book. In contrast to the eastern European Jews, German Jews returned to their hometowns. However, they encountered indifference from their non-Jewish neighbors and tensions with the eastern European DPs. The importance of their struggle to re-establish legally recognized, organized Jewish communities–the institutional framework framework for Jewish life–cannot be overemphasized.

Chapters Two and Three, on the eastern European DPs and the German Jews, occupy one-third of the book. The author then jumps to a lengthy examination of the

Jewish community of Berlin. In fact, over one-third of the book deals with the erstwhile capital city. While Gay's depiction of Berlin Jewry is extremely interesting and another highlight of the book, it may unbalance her broader analysis of Jewish life in Germany after 1945. Berlin's community was historically the largest and most important, but after 1945/49, the communities of the Rhineland clearly took precedence in practical matters. Western Germany was home to the Jews' principal publication (the *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*), most important representative organ (the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland), and chief leaders, with the exception of Heinz Galinkski. Berlin's significance remained principally symbolic.

The final chapter, "New Generations in Germany," focuses on aspects of Jewish life in more recent years, including higher education, museums, Holocaust memorials, and Russian immigration. While this chapter is particularly interesting and relevant as it considers the contemporary community, it represents a disjunction with the earlier chapters, which deal with the initial decade after World War II. In many ways, however, it is this final chapter that provides the book's *raison d'etre*. As the Jewish community in Germany grows and thrives today, and as Jewish-related issues become hot topics of public debate and scholarly examination, Gay wishes to show the links between the contemporary community and its late-1940s origins.

This is, above all, a story about people. While Gay does rely to some degree on traditional documentary, archival sources, she makes far more extensive use of primary-source quotations in pre-existing secondary literature, contemporary newspaper accounts, and memoirs. In fact, her narrative is liberally sprinkled with these quotations. By doing so, she gives the book a particularly personal aspect. She introduces scores of intriguing people whose private opinions shape her own view of events. While she largely steers clear of critical institutions and wider political debates, particularly in West Germany, structural obstacles to Jewish life in the former German Democratic Republic (i.e. Communist Party antisemitism and obstructionism) are not ignored.

With a chapter apiece on the eastern European Jewish DPs and on the last German Jews, followed by a lengthy assessment of the remnants of the once-storied Jewish community of Berlin, and a concluding chapter on the Jews of Germany in more recent years, Gay gives the reader a worthy overview. The scope of her secondary research makes *Safe among the Germans* a notable distillation of the pre-existing scholarship on various aspects on post-1945 Jewish life in Germany. Moreover, her extensive use of quotations from those who experienced the events first-hand gives her story a human touch, and her writing is light and engaging. In this sense, this book serves as an interesting broad introduction to the topic, and it will be of particular use to the non-specialist who wishes to acquire some familiarity with the topic.

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