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David Cesarani, Paul A. Levine, eds. *"Bystanders" to the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation.* London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2002. 286 pp. \$54.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7146-8243-3.

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In recent years, both topic and term "bystanders to the Holocaust" have received much greater attention, with the discussions giving more careful attention to its inherent and substantial complexity. Interpreting precisely this complex nature of the "bystanders" issue, and explicitly rejecting simplistic explanatory approaches, was the central theme of a 1999 colloquium, the basis for *"Bystanders" to the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation*.

The demand for a better understanding of the complexity of the topic comes out clearly and early on in the book (in the introduction by the editors, David Cesarani and Paul Levine), and is reiterated subsequently, most fervently in Tony Kushner's "Search for Nuance in the Study of Holocaust 'Bystanders.'" In his historiographical essay Kushner warns, "for rather than nuancing our understanding of the complexity of human responses during the Holocaust, the bystander category is in danger of aiding the tendency to see the subject in Manichaean terms, as a symbol of mass evil alongside much less prevalent absolute good (with the emphasis put on the latter to enable hope for the future)" (p. 61).

To an extent, the book's title may be misleading. As some readers might expect erroneously, the subject of a majority of contributions to the book is, in fact, not the passive bystander, be it individual or government, that looked away or did far less than was possible or required. Some of the "usual suspects" are clearly included with both Kushner and Cesarani focusing on Britain (and Meredith Hindley on both Britain and the United States), and with Jacques Picard criticizing the attitude and policies of the administration of Switzerland, a country that has come under particularly intense scrutiny in recent years.

However, much more frequently those courageous individuals (or groups of individuals) are examined who decided not to stand by idly while the perpetrators of the Holocaust were engaged in the slaughter of millions. The central focus of Cesarani's "Taxonomy of Rescuers in a 'Bystander' Country" is not the British government, but twelve British key refugee activists and rescuers. One of the most notable and most widely-known examples of a rescuer and rescuing mission is covered in Sune Persson's essay on Folke Bernadotte. As Persson writes and concludes with much passion, in particular against those authors that have, in his view, denigrated Bernadotte, "the Jews were not prioritized during this rescue mission. But that cannot, in any way, diminish the fact that thousands of Jews, probably more than 5,000, were saved by those famous Swedish 'white buses'" (p. 264).

Bernadotte aside, the book more frequently presents and examines the role of others whose names may not be very familiar to a wider audience. In doing so, Paul Levine in particular demonstrates very incisively the transition seemingly "committed" bystanders made towards becoming rescuers, in this case Swedish mid-level bureaucrats such as Gösta Engzell. As similarly shown in Cesarani's essay, most notably in his portrayal of the antisemitic Harold Nicolson, outspoken support and physical help for the victims did arrive from unforeseen quarters.

On its own, this particular book can only cover some of the many individuals, groups and states that have been subsumed within the category of "bystanders to the Holocaust." To provide a complete overview of the topic was, in fact, never the intention of the colloquium organizers. Instead, they have set themselves the ambi-

tious and commendable target to explore the topic exhaustively through further colloquia and books. The second colloquium in the series has, in fact, already taken place (in 2002); the accompanying edited collection is due to follow. Once completed, this series of publications will provide the most detailed insight into bystander attitudes, behavior and policies yet. It will thus reinforce Raya Cohen's verdict that "the term 'bystander' has earned a place of distinction in Holocaust historiography: having become one of the pillars of Holocaust re-

search, it now stands alongside the very perpetrators of the crimes and their victims" (p. 146).

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