

Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference (The Holocaust and its Contexts). Edited by Suzanne Bardgett, Christine Schmidt, and Dan Stone. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 324 pp.

Among academic publications on the history of the Holocaust, there are always a few the significance of which seems beyond question immediately after they have been published. *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference* is definitely one of these important volumes. The editors collected outstanding studies from the conference papers presented at the sixth “Beyond Camps and Forced Labour” conference, which was the latest in a series of conferences under this name held at the Wiener Holocaust Library (WL) and Bierbeck College, University of London in January 2018.

In the Introduction the editors – Suzanne Bardgett of the Imperial War Museum, Christine Schmidt of WL and Professor Dan Stone of the Royal Holloway, University of London – give a great overview about the history of the conferences’ past. The first Beyond Camps and Forced Labour conference took place in 2003, organized by the late David Cesarani, one of the leading scholars of academic Holocaust research worldwide. This conference has been held every three years in London (UK) and has welcomed new research on a variety of themes on the Shoah since then.

In recent years, the lasting effects of the Holocaust, including its economic, psychological, and societal consequences, have been of increasing interest among historians. Thus, the book is not a “Holocaust book” in a narrow sense, because it highlights current research findings primarily concerning the aftermath of the Holocaust and the scholarship on the Holocaust. While it includes studies concerning “classical” topics (such as camp life and refugee politics), these writings do not make up the preponderance of the volume. In the case of the contributions and materials which do not belong to this group, one finds excellent texts, primarily analyses which use new methods or approach their subject from new perspectives. The studies draw on thousands of previously unknown archival materials, but also a huge amount of ego-documents. Stephanie Hesz-Wood, for instance, offers spatial analyses concerning the Drancy internment camp from architectural and memorial perspectives. Other works focus on groups of victims and refugees during the war that have been largely overlooked in the scholarship, such as Evelyn Price’s investigation of the Quaker resistance fighters in Nazi

Germany. Patricia Kollander draws attention to important details concerning a neglected topic: the fates of some 30,000 Jewish emigres who fled Austria and Germany for the US (certain groups of whom were taken to Camp Ritche in Maryland during the war).

The studies focus on the victims and survivors on the whole. Many of them attempt to consider the events from the perspectives of the victims, and some analyze various historical sources created by persecuted groups or individuals. As Ruth Leiserowitz asks in her study about one of the key questions in her research on Jewish citizens of the Soviet Union, “[w]hat problems confronted them and what strategies did they develop in order to overcome [the effects of the Holocaust]?” Leiserowitz also considers the possibilities these people had “for expressing their lives ‘as Jews’” (p.186). Some contributors examine the life situations of people in displaced persons’ (DP) camps. Although the secondary literature on these postwar camps and the Jewish refugees has grown considerably in recent years, it has nonetheless continued largely to disregard the fates of survivors and refugees from marginalized geographical territories, such as the southern peripheries of the continent and East and Central Europe.

In contrast to this trend, this volume shows significant interest in peripheral issues. Ildikó Barna offers a comprehensive analysis of sources concerning Hungarian Jewish survivors who escaped Hungary between 1945 and 1949 and fled to Italian DP camps in Apulia. Her work is a groundbreaking investigation in the field of DP research. She analyzes personal records found in the Bad Arolsen Archives and uses these sources to shed light on the political motivations behind emigration (and flight) from communist Hungary. Other studies tend to examine survivors’ experiences on the basis of narrative documents written or created by the survivors themselves. Yael Siman and Nancy Nicholls use first-person video testimonies to examine the social integration of Jewish immigrants to Chile and Mexico or their transition to other countries. They use the term feeling “home” as their main principle of integration into these countries. Eliana Hadjisavass examines the rescues and circumstances of refugees who were brought from the liberated concentration camps to Cyprus by the American Joint Distribution Committee between 1946 and 1949. The internment camps on the island played a key role in Jewish (mostly Zionist) emigration to Palestine, but the various activities of the Joint Distribution Committee and the impact of its decisions on Jewish internees have been overlooked for the most part until now.

Another characteristic of the editorial selection is that it features children’s voices, as is true of Hadjisavass’s paper, for instance. Kathrin Haurand’s epic

study presents the history of Jewish children who were given refugee status in Teheran, Persia during the war and later resettled in Mandatory Palestine. Paul Weindling investigates Josef Mengele's experiments in Auschwitz on twins who for the most part were children. His study gives an exceptional overview of the topic based on fundamental archival research, and he revises the number of the Jews forced to take part in Mengele's experiments. Weindling identifies 558 Jewish twins and dwarves by name or number, as well as 24 Sinti and Roma twins, providing an overall number of 582. Another important contribution to the volume is a discussion by Kateřina Králová which explores narrative sources written by a Greek Jewish survivor named Ester Franko. Franko's parents were killed in the Holocaust, but she hid in an orphanage, survived the catastrophe, and grew up in a foster family. Králová examines her Jewish-Greek identity by considering her bonds to memories of her birth family, her relationship with her foster parents, and Jewishness in postwar Greece, drawing primarily on narrative texts containing family stories and ego-documents.

As noted in the introduction, the volume consists of only sixteen studies in edited form from the 125 papers presented at the sixth conference. Alas, this is one of its weak points. The editors do not offer an adequate discussion of their editorial principles, nor do they explain the criteria on which they based their decisions to select the studies they did. Readers are left to venture guesses about the selection processes.

Bardgett, Schmidt, and Stone emphasize the great variety and the broad methodological and conceptual range of the findings in the secondary literature on the aftermath of the Holocaust, and this variety and depth have unquestionably been increasing in recent years. This makes it impossible to represent the wide array of different kinds of research presented at the conference. One can hope merely to offer a somewhat arbitrary sample of them. As noted in the introduction, "[t]he research presented in this volume highlights new approaches and findings based on sources that have been thus far under-utilised, on groups of historical actors that have been on the periphery within existing English-language historiography, as well as geographies that have, until now, undergone less scrutiny" (p.4). It is also worth emphasizing the significance of the research on the wide variety of the actors, with special regard to previously underrepresented areas, such as Eastern or Southeastern Europe. I must pause, however, to highlight one of the problems with the selections made by the editors. The 14 studies were written by 17 authors, but 12 of these authors came from the so-called West. More than half of the contributors (Gilly Carr,

Eliana Hadjisavass, Stephanie Hesz-Wood, Evelyn Price, Paul Weindling, Lauren Willmott and the editors) are employed at universities and research institutes in the UK, which is even more surprising and suggests a degree of partiality. The rest of the authors from the West are from Israel (Dalia Ofer, Sarah Rosen), the USA (Patricia Kollander), France (Kathrin Haurand), and Austria (Philipp Mettauer, Maximilien Becker). Only five of the contributors are from one of the former communist countries of Central Europe or some non-Western part of the globe: Kateřina Králová (Czech Republic), Ruth Leiserowitz (Poland), Nancy Nicholls (Chile), Yael Siman (Mexico) and Ildikó Barna (Hungary). This clearly indicates that the editors used an arguably questionable selection process, considering the global trends and the increasing number of (post)-Holocaust research initiatives, especially in Central Europe. The poor representation of the Central European, Asian, and Latin American Holocaust scholarship is a general problem in the field, and it is undoubtedly the result of many factors (the small number of extensive academic networks, inadequate support from state institutions in these regions, etc.). Had the editors' selection process been more democratic and open to scholars from peripheral countries, the massive number of conference papers would have provided a basis more than adequate for the volume.

My critical remarks notwithstanding, the volume is a long-awaited collection of superb studies on the history of the Holocaust. With its important research findings and the new focuses on underrepresented groups and individuals, the volume furthers a more nuanced understanding of the fate of the Jews during and after the Holocaust. One can only hope that, when a collection of studies is compiled from the papers presented at the next conference, the editorial team (which will consist of the same people) will consider more research from the marginalized territories of current Holocaust scholarship.

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