Introduction to Volume III

MARION KAPLAN AND NATALIA ALEKSIUN

"THEY LEFT US THEIR STORIES"[1]

Years ago, Holocaust historian Saul Friedländer reminded us that the "voices of the victims are essential if we want to attain an understanding of this past."[2] It is in this sense that Volume III focuses on victims' perspectives. Beyond such notable individuals as Anne Frank, Primo Levi, or Elie Wiesel, ordinary victims' voices are still far less recognized than those of the perpetrators who decided whom, how, where, and when to single out, persecute, and murder.[3] Already during the war, Jewish scholars, concerned that the history of the suffering and mass murder of Jews would be told by the Nazis, called on the victims to record their fate.[4] In the aftermath of the Holocaust, survivor scholars warned against the research becoming "Nazi-centric" and set out to collect thousands of testimonies of Jewish men, women, and children.[5] Still, in the postwar era, research outside Israel tended to prioritize investigating the perpetrators, first the top echelons and "desk murderers" and then the "ordinary men." Some historians included victims, at best, on the margins.

The authors in this volume, however, pay close attention to the experiences, responses, and fates of victims: Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, physically

[1] This is the last line of Chapter 16 by David Silberklang in this volume.

[2] S. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. I: *The Years of Persecution 1933–1939* (New York, HarperCollins, 1997), p. 2.

[3] For further bibliography, see D. Stone, 'A victim-centred historiography of the Holocaust?', *Patterns of Prejudice* 51:2 (2017), 176–88. See also D. Michman, 'Bureaucratic "Gehorsamkeit," peer pressure, bottom-up initiatives: Ordinary people and the successful implementation of Nazi anti-Jewish policies', Kick-off lecture, Conference in Honor of Christopher Browning, Münster, 29–31 October 2019, www.bpb.de/mediathek/video/305440/bureaucratic-gehorsamkeit-peer-pressure-bottom-up-initiatives.

[4] See A. Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom: A Memoir* (Washington, D.C., USHMM, 1999); S. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2018).

[5] P. Friedman, 'Problems of research on the Holocaust: An overview', in P. Friedman, *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust* (New York, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), pp. 554–70, esp. p. 561; L. Jockusch, *Collect and Record!: Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Chapter 1 by Boaz Cohen in Volume I of this series.

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or mentally challenged people, Slavs, and Soviet POWs. They analyze how the persecuted – collectives or individuals – understood the unfolding events and how they circumvented, adapted, negotiated, or tried to defy their own entrapment and murder in different local settings. Therefore, these essays offer perspectives different from those of Nazi leaders and supporters (see Volume II of this series). Here scholarly attention addresses the issues of what the victims experienced, what they knew, and how they interpreted and responded to limited information and intensifying persecution. And thus, this volume underscores differences between the victims' experiences in eastern and western Europe, pointing to further national and regional complexities.

Instead of analyzing the perpetrators' movement from the stripping of civic rights to genocide, a victim perspective – enriched by *Alltagsgeschichte* (the history of daily life), women's history, and generational and gender analyses – helps us to better understand the variety of responses of European Jews. These include, for example, Jewish Councils and underground networks as well as Jewish organizations abroad, down to individuals' survival strategies in ghettos, in camps, and in hiding. This approach also brings together such aspects of daily life as family, religious practice, and culture, drawing on a variety of sources produced by those targeted for destruction. Likewise, this volume employs the victim perspective of other persecuted groups.

Victim-focused research agendas derive in particular from ego-documents, including diaries or letters written during the war, or memoirs and interviews of persecuted individuals who reflected on their traumas. As a result, we gain insight into the diverse reactions and behaviors of adults and children, as well as leaders and individuals who had little control over their own destinies. Indeed, sometimes these and institutional sources are only partial records that end abruptly, leaving many unanswered questions. For some victims, perpetrators' records remain the only available documentary trace.

This volume not only addresses the events of the Holocaust era, but also gives an overview of debates in their historiographical contexts. For example, while some scholars in the field of Holocaust studies have criticized the Jewish Councils harshly, others see them as having assumed necessary duties or continued prewar administrations (see Chapters 5 and 6 by Beate Meyer and Katarzyna Person). Moreover, some authors in this volume show how historians have revisited their critical views over time, often influenced by a more recent appreciation of archived Jewish ego-documents, including early testimonies and later interviews as well as the discovery of newer

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materials (see Chapters 4 and 6 by Wolf Gruner and Katarzyna Person). Also, scholarship pays increasingly close attention to various aspects of Jewish agency and resistance beyond armed struggle, such as culture and religion. For example, Jewish ghetto archives in Warsaw, Łódź, Wilno (in Yiddish Vilna, today Vilnius), Białystok and Kovno (today Kaunas) – in this volume we use geographic terms for cities and towns in eastern Europe that refer to historical and current administrative names or their Yiddish versions – demonstrated that one could fight with pen and paper as well as with guns (see Chapters 9, 10, and 17 by Havi Dreifuss, Samuel Kassow, and Daniel Lee and Natalia Aleksiun). Indeed, historians are beginning to broaden the definition of "resistance" itself to include not only groups, but also individuals who opposed Nazi laws or intentions in a variety of ways.[6]

JEWISH RESPONSES: "NOT UNDER CONDITIONS OF THEIR OWN CHOOSING"[7]

Beginning with Germany – the center of Nazi power – the chapters in this volume move on to Greater Germany that incorporated Austria, the Sudetenland, Bohemia, and Moravia, and then German-occupied or -controlled Europe. Jews of various classes, ages, genders, and ethnic identities, including those who had converted to Christianity, paid careful attention to Germany's territorial expansion and mounting torment. Indeed, in Germany, and later throughout Europe, Jewish organizations, families, and individuals scrutinized national and local attitudes towards Jews, and increasingly noted bottom-up reactions within their professional milieus, institutions, and neighborhoods and even among former friends, starting with ostracism and leading, often, to outright violence. As early as spring 1934, observers such as the French journalist Alfred Berl noted that the Nazis had tried to push the Jewish population "outside the community, outside culture, and outside humanity."[8] Many witnesses registered their disappointment, shock, and disbelief that

[6] W. Gruner, *Resisters: How Ordinary Jews Fought Persecution in Hitler's Germany* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2023).
[7] K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York, Digireads.com, 2012), p. 5.
[8] A. Berl, 'Sous le signe de Hitler: La guerre à l'esprit', *Paix et droit*, April 1932, 1. See also Chapter 1 by David Engel in this volume, p. 31.

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seemingly successful integration (in the West) and more tenuous status as citizens (in the East) could be upended so quickly, not only at government instigation but also by widespread eruptions of hatred at the grassroots.

Prior to the Nazi takeover, German Jews had been on average six times better off economically than Jews in Poland and 1.75 times more prosperous than Jews in all countries across the globe.[9] The international focus on German Jewry in the 1930s arguably helped a significant part of that community gain attention and some relief from abroad. Elsewhere in the European-Jewish world, especially in eastern Europe, even before the outbreak of war, antisemitism or indifference to their hardships turned the distress of much larger Jewish communities from chronic to acute, leaving them with dwindling possibilities for improving their plight. For example, between 1935 and 1937, Jews in Poland fell victim to violent attacks. Many Jewish observers in the country interpreted these phenomena as a reflection of growing Nazi influence within Poland itself.[10]

In Europe, where Jews made up a very small proportion of the population, although a significant share of some urban societies, Jewish individuals, small groups, and representative bodies attempted first to mitigate the effects of Nazi policies and later to protect themselves and other Jews from hostile attacks and onslaughts. Therefore, a vast range of Jewish responses already occurred in the early 1930s, often partly sustained by international Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (see Chapter 29 by Avinoam Patt). This included extensions of Jewish social work and Jewish schools, as well as Jewish emigration, employment, and retraining centers. Over time, however, relentless persecution threatened any significant alleviation and eventually stamped it out altogether.

Still, it is crucial to realize that Jews could *not* predict the future in the 1930s as much as today many may be tempted to read backwards from 1945. Curtailing of rights and violence in Germany and annexed Austria did *not* mean that people could envision later ghettoization, mass shooting, and extermination camps in eastern Europe. By the end of 1938 – starting with the November Pogrom (Kristallnacht) in the Greater German Reich – and, most obviously by the time of the attack on Poland in 1939 – the beginning of the Second World War – Jews had

[9] A. Ruppin, *The Jews in the Modern World* (London, Macmillan, 1934), p. 158.
[10] K. Kijek, A. Markowski, and K. Zieliński (eds.), *Pogromy Żydów na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Vol. II: *Studia przypadków (do 1939 roku)* (Warsaw, Instytut Historii im. Tadeusza Manteuffla PAN, 2019); J. Żyndul, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935–1937* (Warsaw, Fundacja im. K. Kelles-Krauza, 1994), pp. 14–55.

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suffered destruction of property, a wave of discriminatory legislation, and rampant violence. And yet, they could not foretell the progressively grave deterioration of their situation.

Moreover, Nazi brutality differed in intensity over time and place, depending on the local conditions and the nature of German control. After Germany invaded Poland, Jews fell victim to physical assaults, looting, and humiliation, and, later on, to mass death due to starvation and disease in the ghettos.[11] By 1942, the genocidal nature of Nazi policy had grown increasingly clear to many European Jews, especially in eastern Europe (see Chapters 11 and 30 by Dariusz Libionka and Richard Breitman). Similarly, non-Jewish resistance groups gathered information about German crimes, but did not always specifically focus on the situation of the Jews. Jewish self-help organizations and non-Jewish welfare and resistance organizations could engage in mutually useful cooperation, depending on local conditions (see Chapter 28 by Beate Kosmala), although these alliances were not always reliable. As a result, Jewish perceptions, and responses, also, varied from local, national, and international observation, apprehension, and resignation to communal mobilization, action, and resistance, depending on their situation in time and place (see Chapters 17 and 29 by Daniel Lee and Natalia Aleksiun, and Avinoam Patt).

Access to information depended on geography and changed over time; it also depended on class, age, and gender. Victims reflected on economic spoliation followed by brutality and trauma, on the pain of starvation and cold, on families split, and finally on mass death before their very own eyes. They exhibited incredulity at what they had heard or even seen, as their hope for survival dwindled. Even in eastern Europe, where persecution quickly turned deadly with the Nazi invasion, Jews struggled to comprehend their fate (see Chapters 11 and 20 by Dariusz Libionka and Dalia Ofer). And still, some Jews fought against their own death sentences, driven by the will to survive and the moral imperative to resist. They hid, passed as non-Jews, and escaped (see Chapters 11, 14, 16, and 17 by Dariusz Libionka, Jan Grabowski, David Silberklang, and Daniel Lee and Natalia Aleksiun) with the aid of other Jews, Jewish organizations, or non-Jewish helpers, or on their own.

[11] H. J. Sinnreich, *The Atrocity of Hunger: Starvation in the Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków Ghettos during World War II* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023).

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JEWISH VICTIMIZATION: "IDEALS, DREAMS AND CHERISHED HOPES RISE WITHIN US, ONLY TO BE CRUSHED BY GRIM REALITY"[12]

This volume attends to victims' agency and its limits.[13] Starting with the Jewish experience, the authors address a vast spectrum of Jewish responses on the communal, familial, and individual levels. The majority of German and Austrian Jews fled (although not all to countries that remained safe). About one-quarter of Jews from Bohemia and Moravia and only one in ten of the Jews of Poland had left their homelands by the time of occupation. Further, over two million Soviet and other Jews managed to flee to the deep interior of the USSR, where many women and men died from malnutrition, disease, and overwork – and yet they had rescued themselves from the Holocaust (see Chapter 15 by Eliyana R. Adler). In a dreadful rush, many European Jews sought myriad visas and, with luck, ended up with legal – or illegal – papers (see Chapter 3 by Michal Frankl).

Throughout Europe, family cohesion was only one of many determinants of possible safety – including class, gender, and age – but it was highly significant regarding leaving or staying, hiding, or surviving in and outside of ghettos and camps (see Chapters 14, 16, 18, and 27 by Jan Grabowski, David Silberklang, Helene Sinnreich, and Anna Bikont). Those parents who decided to split their families hoped that this strategy could ensure the safety of their dear ones. Right after the November Pogrom, many Jews in Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate attempted to send their youth abroad by offering skilled training programs or by creating options to bring unaccompanied children to safe lands. More than 18,000 children and youth left Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate without their parents by way of *Kindertransports* or the Youth Aliyah program.[14] As the war progressed, some parents asked non-Jews – even strangers – to shelter a child, and still others gave the care of their children to resistance workers or Christian institutions (see Chapters 20, 21, and 27 by Dalia Ofer, Joanna Beata Michlic, and Anna

[12] A. Frank, *The Collected Works* (London and New York, Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019), p. 205.
[13] T. Kuehne and M. Rein (eds.), *Agency and the Holocaust: Essays in Honor of Debórah Dwork* (New York, Palgrave, 2020).
[14] M. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 109–18.

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Bikont). In Nazi-occupied eastern and western Europe, some of the children who survived in this way endured emotional abuse as well as physical and sexual mistreatment, not to mention the lasting trauma of separating from or losing their parents entirely.[15] At times, even older siblings, on their own, helped to hide younger children, all passing as Christians. Despite these efforts, it is estimated that only 6–11 percent of Europe's prewar population of Jewish children survived the Holocaust (see Chapter 21 by Joanna Beata Michlic).

The minuscule percentage of child survivors and the overall death rates during the Holocaust require an analysis of victims' experiences in the cramped, unhygienic spaces that perpetrators forced them into. After the November Pogrom, the German Reich began coercing Jews to leave their homes, belongings, and neighborhoods to relocate to "Jew Houses." These crammed residences increased the ability of the Gestapo to approach at will and terrorize the inhabitants. Soon the Nazis forced Jews into ever smaller lodgings, even barracks, where hunger and disease ran rampant. Such moves "ravaged" their pasts[16] (see Chapter 8 by Andrea Löw), yet, even here, some could build communities of suffering. Still others agonized through further degradation until deportation. In eastern Europe, Jews confronted daily challenges, forced into overcrowded ghettos of various sizes and types. In Tarnów, a young woman described the situation of ten people from four families living in one room (see Chapters 8 and 20 by Andrea Löw and Dalia Ofer). Victims recalled mixed feelings, ranging from despair and alienation to acceptance and efforts to create a "homelike" living quarter. Having found a makeshift shelter, most Jews faced severe food shortages (see Chapter 20 by Dalia Ofer). Women and children often smuggled food into ghettos, some women engaged in sexual barter, and many men provided a pittance for their families through forced labor. Yet, as the war dragged on, ghetto inhabitants experienced intensifying hunger, although many Jewish Councils tried against overwhelming odds to organize subsistence (see Chapter 5 by Beate Meyer). Without any real power and forced to operate within deadly constraints, Jewish leaders aimed to provide for the survival of their communities (see Chapters 5, 6, and 8 by Beate Meyer, Katarzyna Person, and Andrea Löw). Some councils strove to make their ghettos vital to the war effort by

[15] B. Chalmers, *Betrayed: Child Sex Abuse in the Holocaust* (Tolworth, Grosvenor House Publishing, 2020); J. Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków: A Microhistory of the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2021).
[16] V. Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933–1941* (London, The Folio Society, 2006), p. 393.

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forcing their inhabitants, often those with little "pull," into slave labor (see Chapter 6 by Katarzyna Person) for the Germans. And, when they could, leaders and diverse communal networks provided soup kitchens and schooling for children (see Chapter 8 by Andrea Löw).

Complementing the efforts of Jewish Councils or Jewish aid organizations, individual Jews reacted to anti-Jewish policies by petitioning local leaders or Nazi bureaucrats. For example, in western Europe, many Jews in a "mixed marriage" (a couple with a Jewish and a non-Jewish "racial" partner, an expression that reflected Nazi racism) or individuals labeled "mixed" (*Mischlinge*, persons with Jewish and non-Jewish parents or grandparents by "race," not religion) appealed to governments to change their designations, some even claiming false parentage. Still, these administrations held fast to policies of discrimination, and sometimes deportation (see Chapter 22 by Susanna Schrafstetter).

Still, Jews continued to search for meaning in the midst of persecution and genocide. Some tried to continue or adjust their religious practices to the conditions of ghettos or camps, and while in hiding (see Chapter 9 by Havi Dreifuss). Jewish men, women, and children wrote diaries and letters documenting their lives, hoping that others would learn what had happened (see Chapters 9 and 10 by Alexandra Garbarini and Samuel Kassow). For example, those who gathered the Oneg Shabbat underground archive in the Warsaw Ghetto worked to assure historical knowledge of communal and private life under Nazi occupation, including family life, women's experiences, refugees, and forced labor. In other ghettos, too, such as in Vilna, some Jews continued to listen to music, read books, attend lectures and theater, and connect to prewar values and memories (see Chapter 10 by Samuel Kassow). In fact, they organized readings, concerts, or amateur acting groups. These could provide an "alternative world" for many deprived inhabitants (see Chapter 8 by Andrea Löw). In hiding and in camps, even with different languages, national identities, and cultures, Jews craved reminders of Jewish and European cultures. Despite starvation, disease, and forced labor, many Jewish women, men, and children sought to maintain their identity and humanity with cultural and spiritual activities (see Chapter 9 by Havi Dreifuss).

While many Jews had kept diaries in ghettos and in hiding, in later years we learn from the writings of people facing impending death. Writing gave expression to the daily dilemmas, the ongoing worries, and the utter destruction of hope as Nazi extermination policies closed in on communities and individuals. But, even then, these ego-documents could serve as a form of personal agency for writers who hoped to communicate with themselves,

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with loved ones, and with those who might survive. Importantly, historians have learned from Jewish voices – as David Silberklang reminds us in Chapter 16, "they left us their stories," without which much of this history would have been lost.

THE "FINAL SOLUTION": "THERE IS NO ANSWER TO AUSCHWITZ"[17]

This volume also portrays the most desperate situations. Despite heroic efforts to resist the ever-intensifying persecution, Jews could not prevail over Nazi policies of mass murder. Their voices squelched, their labor extorted (see Chapter 4 by Wolf Gruner), and their lives crushed, we still find traces of attempted escapes, defiance, and resistance, and gray zones along with gender, class, and age differences to study and contemplate. In addition, victims' awareness of their neighbors' and onlookers' attitudes adds an important dimension, generally silenced by the bystanders and enablers who evaded discussing their own complicity.

Early on, several authors consider examples from concentration camps in which Nazis intended Jewish "destruction through labor," but did not automatically or summarily murder the Jews. Hunger and torture reigned in these camps, and yet Jews from a vast array of nationalities, languages, classes, genders, and generations attempted to survive, which amounted to a form of self-assertion and resistance in the face of overwhelming odds and despite devastating losses (see Chapter 12 by Kim Wünschmann). Writing, drawing, educating each other, hiding or burying accounts of mistreatment and crimes, up to and including iconic acts of armed struggle such as the Sonderkommando uprising in Birkenau on 7 October 1944 offer a spectrum of (im)possible reactions by men and women to murderous oppression (see Chapters 10, 12, 13, 16, and 17 by Samuel Kassow, Kim Wünschmann, Imke Hansen, David Silberklang, and Daniel Lee and Natalia Aleksiun).

Volume III also addresses the issue of "gray zones" in ghettos and camps. These encompassed Jews put in situations where some achieved relative

[17] A. J. Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987), p. 115.

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power and privilege over other Jews. In ghettos, this pertained in particular to Jewish Councils and Jewish Police, who were increasingly forced to participate in German persecution (see Chapter 6 by Katarzyna Person). In camps, prisoner functionaries remained responsible to and dependent upon the approval of the SS, without which they could face death ordered by their superiors or at the hands of other inmates. Constituting a complicated ethical position, gray zones troubled survivors and challenge historians who attempt to understand the roles of these prisoners (see Chapter 13 by Imke Hansen).

Additionally, these chapters explore the dilemmas Jews faced in planning escapes, organizing the rescue of themselves and others, and considering a revolt. In eastern Europe, hundreds of thousands of Jews tried to escape from ghettos and camps and attempted to hide or pass as non-Jews. Also, they organized uprisings in dozens of ghettos and camps, along with efforts to join partisans fighting against the Nazis. Additionally, the authors assess the impact of uprisings on Jews' fate and on Germans' reactions as well as whether or not non-Jewish underground networks, partisan units, and armies came to their assistance (see Chapters 14, 16, 17, and 27 by Jan Grabowski, David Silberklang, Daniel Lee and Natalia Aleksiun, and Anna Bikont).

And, we note that gender differences existed in concentration camps, under military occupation, and in ghettos. Although women carried a double vulnerability in terms of "race" and gender, the camp system of the 1930s adhered to a "gender-determined delay in the use of SS terror against women"[18] (see Chapter 12 by Kim Wünschmann). Also in hiding and passing, Jewish women could have an easier time than Jewish men. Women could prove useful in helpers' households, while circumcision could easily mark and doom Jewish men. Moreover, in western Europe, men of draft age were immediately suspect. On the other hand, Jewish women were particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. In the heat of war, the German army raped and murdered. Whereas racial "mixing" between Jews and non-Jews remained forbidden inside Germany, German civilians, soldiers, and the SS observed no such restraints in the field, in the ghettos, or during roundups. Additionally, women and girls faced sexual exploitation or violence from non-Jewish bystanders, aid givers, and fellow Jews as well. Under extreme stress, some tried to gain protection and evade starvation, violence, or death

[18] N. Wachsmann, 'The dynamics of destruction: The development of the concentration camps, 1933–1945', in J. Caplan and N. Wachsmann (eds.), *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories* (London, Routledge, 2010), pp. 17–43, citation p. 28.

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through sexual barter.[19] Thus, sexual violence remained an "intrinsic" part of the "Final Solution" (see Chapter 19 by Regina Mühlhäuser).

Victims observed the Nazi persecution and mass murder of Jews as a crime committed by the Germans. Still, the voices of the persecuted implicate majority societies in eastern and western Europe. They indict non-Jews who betrayed and persecuted their Jewish neighbors and who profited from the destruction of Jewish communities. Omer Bartov reminds us that, in the East, "what we call the Holocaust and associate largely with mass murder facilities and gas chambers was played out more intimately in the form of communal massacres."[20] He emphasizes that "large numbers of Jewish victims were slaughtered in front of family members, friends, and colleagues."[21] In particular, Polish Jews, the largest European Jewish community before the war, closely observed their compatriots. Natalia Aleksiun also points to Jewish witnesses who stressed "intimate violence," that is, "hostile close encounters" between former neighbors that covered the spectrum from intimidation and abuse to murder.[22]

And yet, cooperation also existed between Jewish groups and non-Jewish upstanders and resisters, the latter of whom effectively hid not only children, but also adults. In western and eastern Europe, Jewish and non-Jewish groups as well as individuals could come together (see Chapters 27 and 28 by Anna Bikont and Beate Kosmala). At the beginning of the 1980s, Serge Klarsfeld argued that the Vichy regime had promoted the annihilation of a quarter of the Jews, but three-quarters of French Jews survived the Holocaust.[23] In Germany as well, individuals and some networks managed to hide a small number of Jews. In Italy, too, some Church leaders and clergy helped shelter Jews, although Pope Pius XII did not as much as comment on the ongoing terror (see Chapters 2 and

[19] A. Hájková, 'Sexual barter in times of genocide: Negotiating the sexual economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto', *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38:3 (2013), 503–33.
[20] O. Bartov, 'Wartime lies and other testimonies: Jewish–Christian Relations in Buczacz, 1939–1944', *East European Politics and Societies* 25:3 (2011), 486–511, citation 491.
[21] O. Bartov, 'Communal genocide: Personal accounts of the destruction of Buczacz, Eastern Galicia, 1941–1944', in O. Bartov and E. D. Weitz (eds.), *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 399–420, citation p. 404.
[22] N. Aleksiun, 'Intimate violence: Jewish testimonies on victims and perpetrators in Eastern Galicia', *Holocaust Studies* 23:1–2 (2017), 17–33. See also J. Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013).
[23] S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy – Auschwitz: Die Zusammenarbeit der deutschen und französischen Behörden bei der "Endlösung der Judenfrage" in Frankreich* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), p. 367.

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28 by Jonathan Huener and Beate Kosmala). Indeed, erratic reactions occurred even inside various religious institutions. Some, like the Catholic Church in Poland, could both exhibit anti-Jewish hostility or indifference and still hide Jewish children (not always for altruistic purposes) (see Chapter 2 by Jonathan Huener).[24] In eastern Europe, particularly Poland, sporadic help came "by decision or by accident" from non-Jews (see Chapters 14, 17, and 27 by Jan Grabowski, Daniel Lee and Natalia Aleksiun, and Anna Bikont), many of whom expected payment for risking their own lives and for the costs of maintenance. Jewish individuals, including children, helped each other, and groups, such as Żegota, made up of Polish Jews and non-Jews, supported Jews in hiding, although it was organized very late in the war. Even then, most help focused on Warsaw (see Chapter 27 by Anna Bikont).

International rescue efforts did not set the goal of attempting to save Jews, as the Allies fought a broader war. Prioritizing military victory, they perceived initiatives suggested by Jewish and non-Jewish organizations as a distraction. A general sense of not seeing or seemingly not knowing about the obliteration of Jewish life continued despite news and eye-witness accounts being repeatedly conveyed from Nazi-occupied Europe. Occasional help appeared, but it was too little, given the scale of the "Final Solution." The Allies lacked the ability to interfere with the murder of Jews because of the practical limits of their military reach through 1943. Nor did the big three Allied powers fighting in Europe find "the will and the imagination to devise non-military remedies for the Holocaust in Europe" (see Chapter 30 by Richard Breitman). Only in early 1944 did US President Franklin D. Roosevelt create the War Refugee Board, which is credited with saving tens of thousands of lives, but this intervention came very late in the cycle of mass murder.

MURDER STRUCK MORE VICTIMS

Hitler turned his murderous gaze first on what Nazis considered "hereditarily determined" *disabled* Germans and German Jews. They focused on "unproductive" human beings, or, in Nazi terminology, "life

[24] N. Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 2009), pp. 141–81.

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unworthy of living." These very first victims of systematic murder – both adults and children – faced institutionalization, starvation, sterilization, and murder in gas chambers or by lethal injection. Nazi Germany used them as a test case for mass murder before turning on Jews. Whereas medical circles, especially many doctors, expressed support of the Nazis' "euthanasia" project, its victims left few letters or diaries. Most of their voices had been silenced and therefore are not easily available to scholars (see Chapter 23 by Paul Weindling).

The Nazi racist agenda included stamping out *homosexuality* as well. Paragraph 175 of the German criminal code of 1871 punished homosexual males well before the Nazi takeover. But the Nazis intensified pressure and punishments. Trying to keep themselves safe, homosexual men expressed their agency through solidarity and caution (i.e., remaining in the closet). Many joined gatherings in private homes, attempted to hide or destroy their address books, and restrained themselves from homosexual acts when the slightest intimacy between men became illegal in 1935 (see Chapter 24 by Geoffrey Giles). Although lesbians did not fall under Paragraph 175, police would sometimes arrest them for "frequently changing sex partners," a term used for prostitutes. Still, lesbians met each other carefully and (sometimes mistakenly) felt safer than men. They, too, aimed at solidarity with others like themselves. Unlike men, when female homosexuals entered concentration camps, they received black triangles, denoting them as "asocials," rather than the pink triangles assigned to male homosexuals. Importantly, even after the war, homosexuals still faced decades of rejection (see Chapter 24 by Geoffrey Giles), leaving historians with few voices of the victims.[25]

Similarly, *Roma*, who were attacked, sterilized, and murdered throughout Europe, have left few written documents. Nevertheless, they, too, attempted to ward off Nazi attacks, particularly if they had been sedentary and employed. They appealed to and pleaded with local or German authorities, hoping that they would be protected as upstanding workers who owned homes and were also First World War veterans. Yet, they faced indifference, discrimination, sadistic "medical experiments" in

[25] D. Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011); L. Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2015); G. Giles, 'The institutionalization of homosexual panic in the Third Reich', in R. Gellately and N. Stoltzfus (eds.), *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001) pp. 233–55.

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Auschwitz, and murder in Nazi-held territories and from fascist regimes in Romania and Croatia (see Chapter 25 by Anton Weiss-Wendt).[26] Some Roma survivors have published autobiographies about their experiences of the Holocaust, such as the books, paintings, and poetry of Ceija Stojka, an Austrian Roma child survivor.

The Nazis targeted *Slavs and Soviet POWs* as well. The attack on Slavs presents a complicated case for Holocaust scholars. Nazi ideology imagined the removal of most Slavs so that Germans could create an imagined "Greater German Reich" within which only some Slavs could live and fulfill subservient roles. Thus, "racially inferior" Slavs remained a victim group, despite a (temporary) hierarchy among them. And the fact that Soviet POWs were seen not simply as enemy soldiers, but as "subhuman racial enemies," meant that the Nazis turned them into the second largest group murdered, 3.3 million people (see Chapter 26 by Waitman Wade Beorn).[27] Yet many Slavs also became collaborators as they turned on their Jewish neighbors.

This volume has not included Afro-German victims (except in Chapter 23 by Paul Weindling) or Jehovah's Witnesses due to the limited amount of research available compared with that on other

[26] M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, 'The persecution of Sinti and Roma, and other ethnic minorities', in M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 113–35; L. Foisneau, 'Mass arrests and persecution of "Nomads" in France, 1944–1946: Post-liberation purges or evidence of "anti-Gypsyism"?', in C. Donert and E. Rosenhaft (eds.), *The Legacies of the Romani Genocide in Europe since 1945* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2022), pp. 21–37; V. Bartash, 'Resistance or survival? Roma in the Soviet partisan units: Memories and archival evidence', in C. Donert and E. Rosenhaft (eds.), *The Legacies of the Romani Genocide in Europe since 1945* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2022), pp. 107–24; P. Trevisan, 'Under an assumed name. A Croatian Roma family network between Fascism and the post-war order in Italy', in C. Donert and E. Rosenhaft (eds.), *The Legacies of the Romani Genocide in Europe since 1945* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2022), pp. 125–43; D. Luebke, 'The Nazi persecution of Sinti and Ròma', Washington, D.C., USHMM Research Brief, 18 April 1990; P. A. Shapiro and R. M. Ehrenreich (eds.), *Roma and Sinti: Under-studied Victims of Nazism* (Washington, D. C., USHMM, 2002). For the "asymmetrical entanglements" of Jewish and Romani histories, starting with some shared spaces of persecution and continuing with Jewish survivor and archival information about the experiences of Roma, see A. Joskowicz, *Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2023). See also T. M. Buchsbaum and S. Kapralski (eds.), *Beyond the Roma Holocaust: From Resistance to Mobilization* (Kraków, Universitas; Warsaw: Austrian Embassy, 2017).

[27] J. Huener, *The Polish Catholic Church under German Occupation: The Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939–1945* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2021); M. Röger, *Wartime Relations: Intimacy, Violence, and Prostitution in Occupied Poland, 1939–1945*, trans. R. Ward (New York, Oxford University Press, 2020); H. Heer and K. Naumann (eds.), *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941–1944* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2000).

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victims. However, an increasing quantity of information on these groups is becoming available.[28]

While this volume seeks to offer an overview of Holocaust scholarship through victims' voices, it also points to areas for further research. Although the fate of Jewish children has attracted the attention of a growing number of scholars, the experiences of elderly Jews, who had little chance to flee, were among the first selected to be deported, and also were among the first to die in ghettos or to be murdered upon arrival in camps, remain less studied.[29] Likewise, more research needs to employ masculinity studies. For example, in Germany, Jewish men lost businesses and their ability to be family providers. Nazis accused them of sexual profligacy and unfitness as soldiers, denigrating their honor and reputation.[30] Another valuable historical lens, the history of emotions, can provide a more nuanced understanding of victims' unique affects and how these shaped their reactions. Certainly, many victims described the wide range of their emotions, but further study could address comparative perspectives, cultural milieus, and changes over time. Emotions also help to understand the personal, intimate dimensions of the Holocaust, both locally and transnationally. Finally, this volume focuses on Europe (except in Chapter 15 by Eliyana R. Adler). Yet, between 1938 and 1945, the Holocaust was "on the move" (as Tim Cole put it), affecting victims and perpetrators across the continent and globe. Indeed, scholars have increasingly cast their gaze toward the edges of Europe and beyond, including Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.[31]

[28] Concerning Afro-German victims, interested readers can start with S. Phillips Casteel, *Black Lives under Nazism: Making History Visible in Literature and Art* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2024); P. Mazón and R. Steingröver (eds.), *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890–2000* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2005), Part I; M. Opitz, K. Oguntoye, and D. Schultz (eds.), *Showing Our Colours: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, trans. A. V. Adams (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1992); https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/afro-germans-during-the-holocaust. Concerning Jehovah's Witnesses, see D. Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom: Jehovah's Witnesses in the Third Reich* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); H. Hesse (ed.), *Persecution and Resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi Regime, 1933–1945* (Bremen, Edition Temmen, 2001); https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-persecution-of-jehovahs-witnesses.

[29] See A. Hájková, 'Speculations about German Jews: Elderly people from Germany in the Theresienstadt ghetto', *Yad Vashem Studies* 50:2 (2022), 55–84.

[30] S. Huebel, *Fighter, Worker and Family Man: German-Jewish Men and Their Gendered Experiences in Nazi Germany 1933–41* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2022). See also B. Krondorfer and O. Creangă (eds.), *The Holocaust and Masculinities: Critical Inquiries into the Presence and Absence of Men* (Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 2020).

[31] T. Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016), p. 2; M. Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees: Hope and Anxiety in Lisbon* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2020). For studies concerning non-European countries, see, for example, M. Dekel, *Tehran*

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In conclusion, people reviled and condemned by Nazi Germany and its collaborators exhibited what little agency remained to them within murderous enterprises and structures. Forced to make onerous choices, their decisions – often made with only limited knowledge about the gravity of their situation – could mean life or death. The overall number of Jewish deaths is staggering: Nazi Germany, its allies, and helpers wiped out entire families and communities. Yet, Jewish individuals, families, and groups did manage to survive until Allied victory. This volume seeks to tell a story not only of heroes (although there were many) or survivors (although they produced invaluable sources), but of the victims' experiences and reactions to racist terror and genocide.

Children: A Holocaust Refugee Odyssey (New York, W. W. Norton, 2019); N. Eppelsheimer, *Roads Less Traveled: German-Jewish Exile Experiences in Kenya* (Oxford, Peter Lang, 2019); M. Edele, S. Fitzpatrick, and A. Grossmann (eds.), *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2017); B. Harris, *Philippine Sanctuary: A Holocaust Odyssey* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2020); M. A. Kaplan, *Dominican Haven: The Jewish Refugee Settlement in Sosúa, 1940–1945* (New York, Museum of Jewish Heritage, 2008); E. Adler, *Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2020); M. Celinscak and M. M. Afridi (eds.), *Global Approaches to the Holocaust: Memory, History, and Representation* (Lincoln, NE, Nebraska University Press, forthcoming 2025).

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