LESSONS AND LEGACIES VII
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The Holocaust in International Perspective

Edited and with an introduction

by Dagmar Herzog
Dedicated to Donald P. Jacobs, dean of the Kellogg School of Business Management, in recognition for his dedication to the work of the Holocaust Educational Foundation and his continuous support and encouragement from the beginning of the foundation's work, especially the conferences of Lessons and Legacies.
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IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE, ONCE MORE, TO THANK THOSE WHO HAVE made the publication of another volume in the Lessons and Legacies series possible. The essays assembled here constitute a selection of those presented at the seventh Lessons and Legacies Conference held at the University of Minnesota in 2002. The Holocaust Educational Foundation is very grateful to Professor Stephen Feinstein for his hard work as host in helping to organize the Lessons and Legacies Conference in Minnesota. Stephen was always available and committed to making the conference pleasant and enjoyable to all the participants. And to Professor Ronald Smelser, who was the academic chair for the conference, we express our gratitude for his strong commitment and excellent work in making the conference an academic success. Thanks to these individuals and their many helpers, the conference not only took varied and stimulating form but also became an integral part of the university's intellectual life. Words cannot convey our appreciation for their accomplishment and for our pleasure at being part of an educational experience in the broadest sense.

My personal thanks to all the scholars who participated and contributed so greatly to the success of the conference.

As was true regarding previous Lessons and Legacies Conferences held at Northwestern University (1990, 1992, and 2000), Dartmouth College (1994), Notre Dame University (1996), and Florida Atlantic University (1998), the sessions could not have occurred without the generous support of many patrons. I am particularly indebted to our board for supporting and fostering this very important undertaking of the foundation.

Once again, we thank Professor Dagmar Herzog for the time and
energy she put into editing this work. Of course and as always, I drew strength for this project from my lifetime partner, Alice, and my children, Deborah, Danny, Gabi, and Jodi, who have become as much a part of the Lessons and Legacies family as they are of mine.

With the Minnesota conference and the publication of this volume and its predecessors, the Lessons and Legacies series has established itself as a major forum for Holocaust study and research. The Holocaust Educational Foundation is proud to have fostered this ongoing initiative and to present this collection of the scholarly results.
Introduction

IN RECENT YEARS, NEW THEMES HAVE COME TO THE FORE IN Holocaust studies. This volume, based on Lessons and Legacies VII: The Holocaust in International Perspective, a conference held November 1–4, 2002, at the University of Minnesota’s Twin Cities campus in Minneapolis–St. Paul, emphasizes a number of crucial issues that are just now beginning to receive serious scholarly attention. Among them are: greed and theft as motives for Holocaust perpetrators and bystanders; sexual violence and what it tells us about the experiences of both victims and perpetrators; collaboration with Nazis among the local populations on the ever-moving eastern front; the durability of anti-Semitism after 1945; and the perspectives of the Soviet military and Soviet leadership on Nazi crimes.

Certainly, one main aim of the seventh Lessons and Legacies Conference was to extend the boundaries of Holocaust scholarship into national arenas beyond the central loci of the planning and execution of technologized mass murder: Germany and Poland. Thus, for example, this volume takes us into ghettos and killing fields in Ukraine and Belarus—and also into spaces whose boundaries and national identifications changed repeatedly. It includes work on the expropriation of Dutch Jews and on the exigencies of post-Holocaust filmmaking in France. And it extends our view beyond Europe, as it draws on insights from such more recent genocides as those in Cambodia and Rwanda to offer deeper understandings of the Nazi genocide of European Jewry. In addition, this volume provides new critical analyses of the course and meaning of responses to the Shoah in nations and locations that have been thoroughly researched before but where scholarly consensus remains contested, from the United
States to the Vatican. At the same time, the volume demonstrates that this expanded geographic focus provides an enhanced vantage point on the trajectory of developments in Germany and Poland themselves, and it includes pathbreaking work on such topics as the ideological indoctrination of the perpetrators, the voyeuristic and self-serving strategies of bystanders, the desperate attempts to escape persecution and death used by some Germans of Jewish ancestry, and the ongoing force of anti-Semitism in post-Holocaust Poland.

As the present evolves, so too does our understanding of what matters most about the past. The introductory essay by Omer Bartov brings into focus the numerous paradoxes structuring early twenty-first-century retrospective thinking about the significance of the Holocaust as a central theme of the twentieth century. Relocating the Holocaust’s import not only in an international context but also in a longue durée time frame, Bartov points out that the end of the cold war brought with it both the opening of Soviet archives and therefore an immense amount of new source material about the Shoah and, tragically, a proliferation of inter-ethnic conflicts in various parts of the world that redirected our attention to the apparently close possible links between intimate familiarity and vicious violence. Insisting on the need to place Nazi anti-Semitism in the broader contexts of twentieth-century state- and empire-building projects and their connections with “scientific” and “eugenic” racism, Bartov emphasizes just as much the imperative of taking the peculiar specifics of anti-Semitism seriously, and not least because of the unanticipated resurgence of new forms of anti-Semitism in recent years. Placing current discussion of the Holocaust’s potential lessons in the context of the “war on terror” and ongoing global economic inequities, Bartov notes as well the unexpected conjunctions in perspective between those who have come to identify the Holocaust as the leitmotif of the twentieth century and those who angrily object to what they perceive as an overemphasis on it. And noting the many challenges that our recently much increased understanding of cruel and self-interested individual and group behavior during the Shoah and other twentieth-century genocides present to a “liberal imagination,” Bartov warns that although we must not discard the idea that we can learn from atrocities, we should not assume that such learning prevents their recurrence.

The essays in part 1, titled “Avarice,” leave no doubt that we have for too long failed to understand the furious dynamism of greed as a
core element in the Holocaust and in its wake. As Jonathan Petropoulos observes, “The Nazis were not only the most notorious murderers in history but also the greatest thieves.” And as Jan T. Gross points out, we cannot even begin to understand the anti-Semitic violence-filled aftermath of the Nazi occupation of Poland—and the remarkable and heretofore unacknowledged cooperation between the Catholic populace and the new Communist overlords—unless we realize that what was at stake was nothing less than the economic positions once fled by the three million murdered Jews of Poland. Directly challenging the old but persistent canard that Jews had a special predilection for communism, Gross provides the heartbreaking evidence that postwar communism was built by anti-Semites and that it was non-Jewish Poles who, within five years after the war’s end, effectively made Poland “judenrein” (free of Jews). While Gerard Aalders calls attention to the massive and intricate legal and pseudolegal apparatus facilitating Nazi control of the Dutch economy and comprehensive expropriation of Dutch Jewry, Frank Bajohr emphasizes the out-of-control pandemic corruption and patronage saturating the “Aryanization” of formerly Jewish-owned businesses in Germany; instead of a bureaucracy, Bajohr finds a bribe-taking nepotistic neofeudal community with ganglike mores. But all of the essays demonstrate that we can no longer neglect the powerful fact of gentiles’ money hunger and its radicalizing impact on the deportation and killing processes, and that attending to the centrality of plunder helps us reframe our assumptions about perpetrator and bystander motivation and about what constitutes complicity.

Part 2, “Ideology,” asks us to think more critically about what exactly ideology is and how it worked under Nazism. In the initial postwar decades, numerous scholars presumed a reductive understanding of ideology as a set of ideas held by a particular group of people, and they too frequently thought of repetition and coercion (“brainwashing”) as the main means by which adherence to an ideology was spread to ever more individuals. More recently, scholars have begun to think more creatively and perceptively about ideology: as a phenomenon which succeeds precisely through, rather than in spite of, apparent contradictions; as something which is not analytically distinct from material or lived reality but rather which profoundly structures our understanding of what counts as reality; and as something that works psychologically and takes hold of selves—indeed, shapes selves—via
complex identificatory processes. In addition, scholars have begun to pay attention to the “positive” and “inspirational” aspects of the work of ideology as well as the more negative prohibitions and prejudices more usually associated with the term. Jürgen Matthäus’s contribution, for example, is to show that the goal of Nazi indoctrination was not so much to inculcate a specific body of ideas but rather to produce a specific “posture [Haltung],” an attitudinal stance characterized above all by “energetic ruthlessness” and a combination of determination and flexibility, a way of being in which constantly self-radicalizing activity was both method and goal, and in which the Final Solution was represented as a quasi-natural phenomenon that seemingly had no human agent or object.

Turning our attention to the strategies of the victims in a world gone utterly mad, Thomas Pegelow sensitively explores the ways some Germans of Jewish heritage, in order to save themselves or loved ones, sought to exploit the contradictions within the Nazis’ hallucinatory but deadly system of categorization—even as, in so doing, they necessarily and however inadvertently reinforced the ostensible reality of those phantasmic categorizations. Turning back again to the perpetrators, the remaining two essays in this section offer further innovative perspectives on the conditions that made Nazi ideology so effective. Edward Westermann highlights the heretofore underresearched relevance of institutional culture for making the Nazis’ distinctive combination of martial and racial ideology persuasive. James Waller offers an eloquent, devastating assessment of the twentieth century’s death toll and a strong argument about the need for multifactor explanations for individuals’ receptivity to participation in mass murder.

Part 3, “Gender and Sexual Violence,” demonstrates how much new insight can be gained by considering men’s experiences in the Holocaust as well as women’s through the lens of gender. As feminist scholarship on the Holocaust grew in the course of the 1980s through the 1990s, so too did some scholars’ anxieties that “a gender analysis” might somehow lead to a painful and inappropriate competition between victimized men and women, to a misapprehension of the overwhelming pertinence of ethnic identity (and also age)—as opposed to gender—in accounting for who was killed and who survived, to an objectionable exposure of shameful matters that should be left private so as not to intensify the hurt already sustained by survivors, or to an unseemly and deeply problematic tendency to titillate readers and thereby trivialize the Holocaust’s horrors. But in
recent years, there has been an increasing recognition that many of these anxieties were misplaced.

Not least because of the incidence of mass rapes perpetrated in the 1990s in the wars convulsing the lands of the former Yugoslavia, there has been growing understanding that sexual violence is itself a human rights violation and a frequent feature of genocides. At the same time, the extraordinary accumulation of empirical evidence from the 1930s and 1940s has led us to acknowledge just how integral different forms of sexual violence were to many aspects of the Holocaust as well. Patricia Szobar's findings foreground the intimate invasions that were such a key tactic of Nazi rule and the excruciating impact of the Nuremberg race laws and ensuing “race defilement” prosecutions on individuals' personal lives and relationships; her insights into the voyeurism drenching the police investigations and the courtroom trials give us new perspectives on perpetrators and bystanders as well. Christa Schikorra challenges prior interpretations of “prostitution” within the concentration camps as something that could be understood as either voluntary or in continuity with victims' prior professional lives; she stresses the “choiceless choice” that shaped the experiences of those who worked in the brothels and urges us to compare concentration camp prostitution not with prostitution in the world outside but rather with slave labor more comparable to the other forms of torturous coerced labor demanded of camp inmates.

Doris L. Bergen's conceptual think piece and call for more sustained investigation into sexual violence as an essential element of the Holocaust emphasizes the plethora of forms of sexual violence to which both female and male victims were subjected, and it emphasizes the intricate links between sexualized violence and diverse aspects of Nazi racism. Bergen also encourages us to reflect on what functions experiences of sexual pleasure and romantic attachment, on the one hand, and enactments of horrific sexual violence, on the other may have had for the (mostly male) perpetrators. Rochelle G. Saidel, drawing from the research for her pioneering book, takes us into the particularities of the women's concentration camp of Ravensbrück. She amasses crucial information on the distinctive experiences of Jewish prisoners in Ravensbrück, a group whose contours have too frequently gone out of focus in studies which extrapolated to Jews from the experiences of imprisoned gentile political or religious dissenters.

The essays in part 4, “Collaboration and the Eastern Front,” con-
front us with multiple difficult issues—difficult both because in fact many individuals and groups were *both* victims *and* perpetrators, especially in territories whose governance changed hands frequently, and because political considerations (both Western and Communist) have long distorted our ability to make sense of the conflicting shards of evidence the historical record offers. All of the essays, then, although informed by the methods of quite diverse scholarly disciplines, engage the important subject of contemporaries’ meaning-making processes. Martin Dean provides an instructive examination of diverse types of collaborator-perpetrators in the Eastern territories and begins the challenging task of identifying these collaborator-perpetrators’ motives. Rebecca Golbert, in a meditative ethnography traversing postwar and post-Communist time zones, captures effectively the confusions of interpretation we confront: in the face of intra-Jewish conflict; in cases when the shared suffering of different groups of Ukrainians became entangled with acts of savage complicity with the occupiers on the part of non-Jews; and in instances in which acts of support flipped over into betrayal.

The two final essays in this part tackle the topic of Soviet perspectives on the Shoah. Harvey Asher offers a critical survey of what the government of the Soviet Union knew about the systematic extermination by mass shooting of Jews on Soviet territory as well as how it interpreted what it knew and the evolution of its reactions. Jeffrey Herf’s provocative piece charts a research agenda for the future as he assesses what the Soviet Union knew of the gas chambers at the Auschwitz concentration camp and whether it could have bombed Auschwitz if it had wanted to. The essays are contrasting but complementary in their analyses. Both, however, make clear that the systematic mass murder of Jews on Soviet territory was no secret while it was happening; the information was not only available to the Soviet government but also publicized in the media.

Part 5 turns to diverse “Dimensions of Memory” and in so doing amplifies our understanding of postwar meaning making in shaping perceptions of the Holocaust and its legacies. Michael Thad Allen provides an original interpretation of the politically compromised German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s postwar self-refashioning and German elites’ enthusiastic reception of Heidegger’s decidedly uneven efforts to rewrite the significance of German guilt. Suzanne Brown-Fleming offers a meticulous and anguished critical examination of the
Catholic Church’s remarkably successful postwar self-construction as having done all it could to help Jews during the Holocaust. And Bob Weinberg supplies a valuable analysis of the long-term suppression of information about the Holocaust in postwar Soviet historiography and the eventual surfacing of attention to the Holocaust in the wake of communism’s demise.

Part 6, “Documentary,” turns to Holocaust films and highlights the challenging issues of representational strategy confronting filmmakers who utilize documentary footage. Stuart Liebman gives us a fascinating introduction to the very first Holocaust documentary, Aleksander Ford’s Polish-Soviet coproduction on the concentration camp Majdanek, liberated by the Soviets in 1944; remarkably, aesthetic techniques used in this film have become so widely adopted in subsequent Holocaust films that most of us do not even recognize them as constructions. Christian Delage in turn provides a nuanced and deeply researched historical recontextualization of the making of what is probably the most widely viewed Holocaust documentary of all time—Alain Resnais’s *Night and Fog*—and makes sense of the pressures under which the filmmaker and his scriptwriter formulated their message to viewers. With astute and perceptive attention to telling detail, Lawrence Douglas analyzes four filmic incarnations of the trial of Adolf Eichmann and the meanings conveyed to various constituencies by the footage excerpts utilized, the identificatory processes mobilized, and the visual juxtapositions and voice-overs employed. Precisely the most aesthetically experimental of the films is also the one which contains a crucial truth that too often gets missed. In it, Eichmann is shown in a moment off guard, smirking: this instant can communicate as powerfully as hours of other evidence the ultimate cynicism of the Holocaust’s main organizers.

Part 7, “Historiography and Pedagogy,” addresses Holocaust scholarship directly. Piotr Wróbel’s essay constitutes a forceful critique of what he identifies as the limitations—in the use of evidence and in analysis—of Jan T. Gross’s much-discussed book, *Neighbors* (first published in Polish in 2000), a study of the 1941 massacre of the Jews of Jedwabne, Poland, by their gentile fellow citizens. While Wróbel expresses just how important *Neighbors* was for catalyzing Poland’s long-delayed confrontation with gentile Poles’ behaviors under Nazi occupation, he also insists that more research needs to be done to uncover the details of intra-Polish conflict, German involvement in