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### Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

### **Genocide and Human Rights: A Philosophical Guide**

John K. Roth (ed.)

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005

352 pp, U.S. \$28.86 (pbk)

John K. Roth's *Genocide and Human Rights* makes a significant contribution to the philosophical study of genocide. Although most contributors to this volume are philosophers from the analytic tradition, many are open to, and directly invoke the work of, continental thinkers. This inclusive approach is welcome. Continental philosophers have made a significant contribution to the body of philosophical work on genocide. Although their counterparts in the Anglophone tradition have been slow to address the philosophical issues that genocide raises, the analytic method is especially suited to gaining greater conceptual insight into the concept of genocide itself—a task that has important implications for international law and public policy. Roth is to be commended for bringing together a group of contributors who draw on the insights of both philosophical traditions. The result is a rich and conceptually illuminating discussion that will no doubt stimulate further philosophical reflection on genocide and other forms of mass violence.

*Genocide and Human Rights* is divided into four parts. Preceding each is a short introduction by the editor, who has also written a prologue and epilogue to the entire volume. The book as a whole explores the various ways in which genocide, and especially the Holocaust, presents philosophers with important normative and conceptual challenges. When Roth suggests that “philosophy” should not go on “as if genocide never happens,” he means that philosophers should recognize how serious these challenges are and respond to them more fully (p 2). As several of the essays in part one suggest, philosophers have not done enough to confront genocide, especially given its pervasiveness and the shattering impact it has on victims. To “confront” genocide is to make sense of it conceptually, to understand the peculiar evil it involves, and to delineate responses that are both ethical and effective.

Philosophers have been slow to confront genocide in another sense. They have said relatively little about the complicity or direct involvement of men and women from their own discipline in genocide, or the connections between philosophical thought and genocidal ideologies. These issues are the focus of the essays in part two of the volume. The essays in parts three and four explore such issues as the meaning of the term “genocide,” resistance and responsibility, punishment and reconciliation.

The essays by Berel Lang, Raimond Gaita, and Claudia Card pursue common themes, although the reader encounters each in a different section of the volume. All three authors set out to clarify the meaning of the term “genocide,” and to understand better the nature of the evil it involves. According to Lang, the evil in genocide is twofold. First, the intent of genocide is to destroy, by various means, social groups in the absence of which “the lives of individual (and collective) humanity would be inconceivable or, at the very least, radically diminished” (p 10). This objective distinguishes genocide from both individual and mass murder. Although mass murder was a feature of such paradigmatic cases of genocide as the Holocaust, it was no more than a means to a second murder—that of European Jewry, a corporate entity with a life and history distinct from that of its individual members. Second, genocide undermines the humanity of its victims by denying their individual autonomy: victims are killed on the basis of who they are, rather than what they have done. From the perpetrator’s perspective, what matters is the victim’s identity and various dispositions and the traits she is alleged to exemplify. Genocide targets its victims, then, on grounds for which they bear little or no responsibility.

Raimond Gaita’s essay develops in more detail Lang’s observation that mass murder is not the only means of destroying a people. Mass murder is *sufficient* for genocide if the perpetrator’s aim is to eliminate a group *as such*. It may not, however, be *necessary*. Gaita explores two examples to help substantiate this claim. The first is historical, and concerns the “stolen generations,” those mixed-blood children taken by the authorities from their Aboriginal parents in Australia from the late 19th century until the late 1960s. The second example is meant to assuage the doubts of those skeptical of the claim that “genocide” accurately describes what was done to the “stolen generations.” Gaita asks whether the forcible sterilization of a group, carried out with the intent of destroying them as a people, should count as genocide (p 157). If the answer is “yes,” then one has good reason to categorize as genocide what was done to the Aborigines during the period of the absorption programs. To answer “no” is to risk losing sight of genocide’s most distinctive aspect, the purposeful annihilation of groups. What makes something paradigmatic of genocide is the “relentless single-mindedness” with which the perpetrator pursues his intention to rid the world of a particular group—not the means utilized in pursuit of this end (p 161).

Like Lang and Gaita, Card recognizes that mass murder is not an essential feature of genocide. She suggests that even when it is homicidal on a massive scale, the evil of genocide lies in the purposeful infliction of “social,” not physical, death. “Social death” occurs when groups that contribute substantively to social life are destroyed. In that event, survivors lose their cultural heritage and connections to previous generations, and their descendents are denied the contemporary and historical relationships that give individuals an identity and make life meaningful. Such harms are evil because they are culpably produced and intolerable (p 246). In fact, Card suggests that the harm of social death is not necessarily less extreme than that of physical death (p 248).

On the whole, I find the positions advanced by these authors to be interesting and philosophically substantive. However, their views are subject to objections, and leave a number of issues unresolved. All three authors need to say more about why the annihilation of only *some* groups counts as genocidal. An account of this distinction is essential if we are to know which groups to include in the U.N. Genocide Convention and to single out for protection. Lang suggests that the logic behind the choice of “national, ethnical, racial, or religious groups” is clear: unlike Sherlock Holmes’s “Red Headed League,” these groups contribute “more essentially to social structure and life” (p 10). But how much conceptual territory can an appeal to such broad notions really traverse? Most esoteric groups, such as cults and societies, lack the historical pedigree and continuity of practice that make meaningful contributions to social structure and life possible. Some, however, are longstanding, and offer their adherents a comprehensive worldview and a model of the good life to emulate. Although such groups negotiate the present by invoking various myths about their origins and subsequent social and political development, they are no different to most nations and major world religions in this regard. Are there other features that make cults and societies “ineligible” for “genocide”? Can we make sense of the wide variation *within* each category presently included in the UN Convention? Should *all* religious communities count or only some? Are there in-group divisions significant enough to make a particular church, splinter movement, or region of a nation-state “eligible” for genocide? According to Gaita, the idea that mass murder is essential to genocide was born of our reaction to specific historical events and not sober reflection. Can something similar be said of the decision to include only “national, ethnical, racial, or religious groups” in the UN Convention? If one is to avoid misuse or overuse of the term “genocide,” these issues must be addressed in greater detail.

There are a number of problems with Card’s claim that “social death” is sufficient to account for the peculiar evil of genocide.<sup>1</sup> To begin with, one need not destroy a group in order to bring about the social death of an individual. Individuals will suffer the harm of social death if they are prevented from maintaining a meaningful connection to their culture and traditions. The objection is that this can happen even when the destruction of a group is neither part of a perpetrator’s intention nor a reasonably foreseeable consequence of his actions (think of the radical isolation of individuals—usually women—in long-term abusive relationships). But why not focus on the *intention* to bring about social death? One difficulty is that, formulated in this way, the social-death hypothesis clashes with Card’s understanding of evil. Evils are constituted by two basic elements: culpable wrongdoing by perpetrators and intolerable harm to victims. Elsewhere, Card tells us that neither of these elements is reducible to the other, and she argues that because they neglect the suffering of victims, accounts of evil which focus on features of the perpetrator’s will are inadequate.<sup>2</sup> Although “intentions may be necessary to defining Genocide,” they cannot, given Card’s conception of evil, be the entire story (p 246).

The difficulties involved in giving an account of genocidal intention—conceived of as one part of a theory of the evil in genocide—only proliferate

with the “social death” hypothesis. Social death is a harm suffered by *individuals*. If the relevant intention includes the infliction of social death as the primary aim, then Card’s account will be at odds with the common-sense idea that genocide has *something* to do with the annihilation of groups. If the primary aim is the destruction of groups, however such an aim is interpreted, then the harm of social death will be an accidental (as opposed to “utterly central”) feature of genocide. On this version of the social death hypothesis, it becomes difficult to distinguish between genocide and “ordinary” cases of cultural change. While there may be a legitimate issue as to whether Stalin’s policies of industrialization and forced collectivization were genocidal, there is surely no corresponding issue regarding the distinction between genocide and the involvement of powerful nations and transnational institutions in the modernization of a traditional society. Such activities may be a form of “cultural imperialism,” but one would hesitate to apply the “genocide” label to them.

The most damaging criticism of the social death hypothesis is that it fails to account for paradigmatic cases of genocide. Card suggests that social death is “utterly central” to the evil of genocide, even when genocide is homicidal on a massive scale (p 238). But suppose a perpetrator sets out to annihilate group X, and succeeds in doing so by murdering every individual who can legitimately claim to be a member of X. No one would hesitate to call this “genocide,” and yet such a case does not involve social death. After all, being *alive* in the biological sense is surely a precondition of experiencing the harm of social death. If a person is dead, the fact that he has lost his cultural heritage and even his inter-generational connections will not matter one bit.

Suppose the Nazis had pursued their genocidal aims by sterilizing the Jews instead of murdering them en masse. In his chapter, Gaita correctly points out that even if this had been the case, the Holocaust would still count as a paradigmatic case of genocide. It would not, however, count as such by virtue of bringing about the social death of individual Jews. Sterilization would not prevent individuals from maintaining a meaningful connection to their culture and traditions. This is especially so if we imagine that the Nazis in Gaita’s example had refrained from deporting the Jews and annihilating the institutions that made their communal life possible. If present generations can continue their life in common, and if there are no future generations to experience “natal alienation,” then how can social death account for the evil of genocidal sterilization?

If these hypothetical examples seem unconvincing, then consider those Germans of Jewish origin whose families converted to Christianity and otherwise assimilated into “mainstream” German society generations before the Holocaust. Although they lacked a vital connection to Judaism and German-Jewish culture(s), we would nevertheless conclude that such individuals were, like unassimilated Jews from the East, victims of genocide. Various facts about the perpetrator’s mindset—especially the appeal to a biological race-based conception of Jewish identity—justify this conclusion. By invoking this conception of Jewish identity, the Nazis denied the moral autonomy of their victims, thereby dehumanizing

them, as Lang suggests. Such facts are more germane to understanding the evil in genocide than facts about the loss of culture.

One essay in Roth's edited volume that I find especially provocative is Thomas's "Innocence, Genocide, and Suicide Bombings." Thomas claims that genocide and suicide bombings that target the morally innocent are "equally wrong" (p 182). What he means by this is that if one claims that killing innocent members of a group is morally justified, one cannot have an in-principle reason for *not* killing *all* the members of the group, "since no human being can be more undeserving of being killed than those who are manifestly innocent" (p 187).

This claim is false. What if the suicide bombing of innocent civilians is the sole remaining means of preventing the ongoing systematic extermination of an entire people by a powerful enemy? Surely the killing of innocent persons in such circumstances is morally very different from killing individuals on the basis of nothing more than their group membership. If this is the case, then moral appraisals of genocide and suicide bombings that target the innocent *do not* "stand or fall together" (p 186). Thomas claims that one cannot have an in-principle reason for *not* killing *all* the innocent members of a group *if* one thinks it morally justified to kill *some*. Central to the evil of genocide, however, is the destruction of *groups* conceived of as entities distinct from the individuals that comprise them. One can think that in principle, the annihilation of groups is evil and never justified while claiming that in extreme circumstances, killing *some* innocent members of a group is morally permissible. Moreover, there are other in-principle reasons to refrain from killing all the members of a group. Such violence would be wanton or unnecessary to achieving the goal of disrupting the systematic extermination of a people. It would also be disproportionate to that goal. For these reasons, Thomas's claims ought to be rejected.

The essays assembled by Roth are engaging and substantive, and will be helpful to researchers and those interested in teaching about the philosophical issues that an engagement with genocide raises. That said, the organization of the volume is not without flaws. In some cases, there is little to no correspondence between the content of an essay and the theme of the section in which it is included. Essays that should have been grouped together—such as those by Lang, Gaita, and Card—are not. While most of the important issues are covered, an article dealing more explicitly with reparations for genocide, and one discussing the conceptual relationship between genocide and other forms of mass violence, would have been welcome. The voices of scholars from the "third world" are for the most part absent, and the range of historical cases dealt with is rather narrow. There is little discussion of colonial genocides, and few—if any—of the authors challenge the idea that the Holocaust was historically unprecedented, constituting a radical break with what Hannah Arendt called the "Western tradition." Many scholars of genocide are now interpreting the Holocaust as continuous with, and intimately connected to, European imperial expansion, colonialism, and mass violence in the Americas, Africa, and elsewhere. On some versions of this interpretation, the Holocaust is a seamless part of the "Western tradition." *Genocide and Human Rights* would have

benefitted from the inclusion of an essay addressing the philosophical issues that run throughout this debate.

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### Notes and References

- 1 I have in the past defended this view. However, after many rounds of discussion with colleagues and much thought, I now think it faces insurmountable difficulties. See Mohammed Abed, "Clarifying the concept of genocide," *Metaphilosophy* Vol. 37, No. 3–4, 2006, pp 308–330.
- 2 See especially chapters 1, 3, and 4 of Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

### **The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil**

Philip Zimbardo  
New York: Random House, 2007  
576 pp, \$27.95 (hbk)

### **Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing**

(2nd edn)  
James Waller  
New York: Oxford University Press, 2007  
384 pp, \$24.99 (pbk)

### **Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide**

Barbara Coloroso  
Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007  
248 pp, CAD\$30.00

To prevent future genocides, we must understand the conditions and the forces that have produced such unimaginable horrors. Unless and until we see past the myths about the causes of such slaughters, which have claimed the lives of 50 to 60 million people in the last century, they are certain to be repeated—especially given the numerous dangers which are now threatening to undermine social and political stability around the globe.

Three recent books have attempted just this task, with varying degrees of success: *The Lucifer Effect*, by Philip Zimbardo; *Becoming Evil*, by James Waller; and Barbara Coloroso's *Extraordinary Evil*. While there is a fair amount of agreement among these authors, each approaches the subject of atrocity and its root causes from a different angle.

The most powerful and insightful effort is by Zimbardo, who is, of course, the pioneering social psychologist most noted for his (in)famous "Stanford Prison Experiment" in 1971, in which male students were randomly assigned to take on

the roles of either prisoners or guards in a study originally planned to last for two weeks. The experiment had to be terminated less than halfway through, because of the deleterious and dangerous changes that affected both groups of subjects. The power that the guards were given created a strong tendency for them to act brutally and sadistically towards their fellow classmates. Those assigned to the role of prisoner, on the other hand, became by and large passive, fearful, and subservient. In fact, half of them needed to be released even before the “prison” was closed early.

About a third of Zimbardo’s book consists of his detailed analysis of the Stanford Prison Experiment, which is the starting point for his investigation of the forces that compel otherwise ordinary people to commit acts of extraordinary horror and brutality. He offers three fundamental explanations for human behavior. The first and most common approach he labels *dispositional*. This view focuses primarily on the level of the individual and his or her personality, experiences, genetic inheritance, abilities, and beliefs. It holds that, most of the time, the locus of control over actions is internal. By this psychological explanation, individuals are held to be usually, indeed almost completely, responsible for their actions—regardless of any other external explanations or forces. Nelson Mandela, for example, is a hero primarily because of the type of person that he is (compassionate, intelligent, and principled), while Saddam Hussein was a villain because of his personal vices (sadism, a hunger for power, and vanity).

The problem with this focus is that most of the people who commit atrocities are not psychopaths, and individual variables alone can account for only a relatively small part of their actions. Indeed, after carrying out their crimes, most return to their “normal” lives and never again exhibit such pathological behavior. Zimbardo therefore offers a second level of explanation, based on *situational* variables outside of individuals that usually provide more robust and comprehensive answers about the sources of inhuman behavior. At this level of analysis, factors such as ideology, de-individuation, domination, socialization, and dehumanization contribute to producing irrational and cruel actions. This focus on social dynamics does not deny the role of personal qualities, but it assumes that, on most occasions, there is an interaction between an individual and their environment in which the latter is most salient for most people in most circumstances.

For all three authors considered here, this view is the most essential: that given the right “situational variables,” practically anyone will do terrible things to other human beings. Zimbardo stresses the insight, also made by Waller and Coloroso, that mass slaughters can be committed by “normal” people because human behavior is extremely malleable, allowing contradictory behaviors to be manifested by the same person in different situations. He writes:

Perhaps we are born with a full range of capacities, each of which is activated and developed depending on the social and cultural circumstances that govern our lives. I will argue that the potential for perversion is inherent in the very processes that make human beings do all the wonderful things that we do.

In other words, the simplistic dualism of believing that “an unbridgeable chasm separates good people from bad people” ignores the reality that human behavior

is characterized by its variability, so that evil is “something of which we are all capable, depending on circumstances” (p 229).

The problems begin when socialization accentuates the negative potential present in us all. A telling example is the almost automatic tendency to divide people into categories of “us” and “them”—a function which can easily be exaggerated, so that those defined as the “Other” appear both threatening and less than human. In one telling study, subjects who “accidentally” overheard a remark that students in a test were “animals” gave them higher levels of electric shocks than subjects who did not hear the “animal” comment. Moreover, subjects who overheard a reference to the students as “nice guys” gave the mildest shocks of all (pp 308–309).

Another natural tendency that can be twisted is the need for community and for connections with nature. Frans de Waal, one of the world’s leading researchers on primate behaviour, writes: “There was never a point at which we became social: descended from highly social ancestors—a long line of monkeys and apes—we have been group-living forever . . . life in groups is not an option, but a survival strategy.” As a result of this evolutionary heritage, de Waal explains, “sociality has become ever more deeply ingrained in primate biology and psychology.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, the main reason for the large cortex in human brains is our need to associate in complex social groups. One problem, however, is that the fear of feeling isolated and alone, if combined with the mental categories of “us and them,” may be twisted into an unhealthy form of nationalism and arrogance, while dehumanizing the Other, whose life counts for little.

This polarization is much more likely to occur when people are fearful, a problem that is clearly illustrated by the changing relationship between Serbs and Croats over the last 60 years. For centuries, the history of these two peoples was drenched in blood, and mutual hostility was part of their cultural legacy. After the Second World War, however, the new Yugoslav government under Tito designed political and social arrangements which stressed peaceful cooperation and unity among all peoples of Yugoslavia. The economic situation of the ordinary Yugoslav improved dramatically and, over a relatively short period of time, the ancient hostility eased. Serbs and Croats began to live together, work together, and even marry one another. Human nature did not change in these few decades, but the social environment did, and that made all the difference. Anger and hatred were replaced by empathy, friendship, and in some cases love.

When economic and political conditions began to deteriorate in the 1980s, however, many people experienced insecurity and fear. Those feelings played a large part in nationalist appeals that led to the rebirth of communal violence, producing horrible atrocities and the genocide of “ethnic cleansing.” In some cases, the very same people who had been neighbors and friends just a few years earlier now turned on each other, committing violent and inhuman acts. Clearly, when people believe their very lives are at stake, they are more likely to do what they are told—including, if “necessary,” slaughtering other people.

The Yugoslav example points to a larger problem regarding the so-called “realist” view that human beings are innately aggressive and that war is in our genes. Zimbardo’s research leads him to inquire about the nature and origin of

those situations that foster war and violence in general, and genocide in particular. He explains situational variables by reference to an even more fundamental factor, that of “*systems of power*” (p 10) which create diverse situations and manipulate people in ways that benefit those in control—the “power elite,” to cite the concept advanced by the sociologist C. Wright Mills. For Zimbardo, the “military–corporate–religious complex is the ultimate megasystem controlling much of the resources and quality of life of many Americans today” (p 10). To his credit, he is not afraid to name names. After examining the lies that spawned the illegal invasion of Iraq and the torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Zimbardo concludes that the blame rests with “the very top of the long chain of command—all the way up to Vice President Dick Cheney (‘The Vice President of Torture’) and President George W. Bush” (p 432).

In the second edition of his incisive work, *Becoming Evil*, James Waller takes a somewhat more general approach than that of Zimbardo. He makes a similar point, namely that it is mostly “ordinary people committing extraordinary evil,” and adds that it is not simply a matter of a person having a pathological or faulty personality. Among the evidence he adduces is the finding by half a dozen psychologists that the Nazi *génocidaire* Adolf Eichmann was normal, rather than diabolical. Throughout the book, Waller emphasizes the unsettling thought that, “given the right confluence of contributing factors, we are all capable of some terrible deeds” (p 161).

Along the same lines, Waller effectively deconstructs the view that a given society must be pathological if it carries out mass murder and genocide. He accomplishes this by reviewing Daniel Goldhagen’s influential book, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, the main thesis of which is that the Nazi Holocaust resulted from an especially virulent strain of anti-semitism in German culture. On the contrary, Waller not only shows that “there is little evidence that the anti-Semitism of Germans was eliminationist” before the rise of Hitler, but also demonstrates that Goldhagen’s belief “that eliminationist anti-Semitism was the central motive of the Holocaust fares no better. The fixation on one over-arching explanation—rather than many overlapping, reinforcing, perhaps partially competing explanations—is too simplistic” (p 52).

The heart of Waller’s study is the chapters devoted to examining the conditions that contribute to mass violence. At the cultural level, he considers such models as “authority orientation” and “social dominance,” which may help to construct ideologies that in turn serve to legitimize mass violence. Waller then studies the psychological factors that make it possible to dehumanize people as “Others” without rights—even the right to exist. Indeed, it helps psychologically to consider such Others as a threat to one’s own values. Finally, Waller examines the “social construction of cruelty,” in an analysis that, like Zimbardo’s, dissects the situational variables that allow people to commit atrocities, including de-individuation and peer pressure.

Finally, although Waller argues that “social conflict is ubiquitous” throughout human history (p xiv), he is not referring to Marx’s view that history “is the history of class struggle.” Indeed, class plays almost no role in Waller’s explanation

of mass killing and genocide. One wonders, though, if it is entirely irrelevant that the capitalist classes in Germany offered Hitler “their full support and cooperation” as the Nazis crushed the trade union movement and established an extremely profitable “military-industrial complex” as a preparation for war. Or that “[t]he Fuehrer personally stressed time and again during talks with . . . industrial leaders . . . that he considered free enterprise and competition as absolutely necessary”.<sup>2</sup> Closer to home, is the lack of action by the United States, Canada, and other G-8 nations in Rwanda and Darfur connected to the lack of economic interest on the part of the business classes in those countries? In his postscript, Waller admits that “the UN and the United States have been very slow” to take any serious actions to halt the genocide in Darfur (p 302). But there is little attempt to explain that inaction.

The relationship between bullying and genocide is the central metaphor in Barbara Coloroso’s *Extraordinary Evil: A Brief History of Genocide*. Coloroso argues that “the concept of genocide in general, and the Rwandan genocide in particular, are macrocosms of the drama known as bullying” (p xx). She does a reasonable job of pointing out similarities between these phenomena, such as the social origins of much cruel behavior. However, the metaphor is stretched thin at times.

Coloroso is at her best in describing some of the psychological aspects of violence, and especially the other side of the coin—when “ordinary” people perform extraordinary feats of bravery to help victims of mass violence. One famous example of mass heroism occurred in Denmark under Nazi occupation:

When the Nazis invaded Denmark in 1940, citizens of all ages united to form a strong resistance movement. Refusing to cooperate with the planned deportation of Jews, the Danes began spiriting their neighbors and relatives across the channel to Sweden in small fishing vessels. Scientists and fishermen worked together to come up with ways to numb the noses of dogs used by the Nazis to search the vessel for stowaways. The small boats, with their undetected human cargo, met up with larger Swedish ships in the channel. In all, 7,200 of the 7,800 Danish Jews and 700 or their non-Jewish relatives were smuggled safely out of Denmark. (pp 125–126)

On the other hand, there is a surprising void when it comes to considering the inaction of the United States, and President Clinton in particular, during the genocide in Rwanda. While Coloroso notes that Clinton eventually apologized to the survivors, she passes over the question of his guilt in silence. She does quote Canadian scholar Gerald Caplan, who argues that nothing “can substitute for political will among the powers-that-can” (p 20). But there is no indication that Caplan has also pointed to “Five Culprits of Genocide” in Rwanda, including the UN, France, the Catholic Church, Belgium, and the United States. In fact, Caplan is the author of *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, the report of the international panel of eminent persons that investigated the 1994 slaughter. He later wrote:

During the genocide, it was the U.S.’s turn to betray Rwanda . . . the craven Clinton administration, under pressure from the Republicans, ensured that the UN Security Council would do nothing . . . Thanks entirely to contrived American stalling tactics . . . not a single reinforcement of man or machine from abroad had reached Rwanda.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the long litany of depressing and horrific stories of violence and cruelty, all these authors agree that things can be done to reduce mass violence. At the core of these prescriptions is the need for critical thought, compassion, and action. Ultimately, systems of power need to be democratized and every human being needs to be treated with respect.

There is another question that all three authors tackle, and on which all three are found wanting—the question of personal responsibility. For instance, while Zimbardo challenges “the rigid Fundamental Attribution Error that locates the inner qualities of people as the main source of their actions,” he adds that this position does not “negate the responsibility” of individuals, “nor their guilt” (p 445). For his part, Waller rightly warns of the danger of dealing with evil “from the heights of moral condemnation rather than the depths of human understanding,” but then declares that, nevertheless, “we are all responsible for our deeds—evil or otherwise” (pp 18–19). In her insightful chapter, “Restoring Community,” Coloroso explores important ideas about necessity of forgiveness, restitution, and reconciliation, but insists that those “who have committed crimes against humanity” must “take full responsibility for their actions” (p 208).

There are at least four major problems with the notion of individual moral responsibility and guilt. The first is that all three authors have done a very convincing job of showing how a multitude of forces beyond individual control—social, economic, cultural, situational, psychological, and so on—can combine to elicit very uncharacteristic behavior from a person; behavior they would never exhibit in less extreme circumstances. Therefore, is it logical or fair to assign “full responsibility” from “the heights of moral condemnation” to those hapless individuals? Is this not making the same “Fundamental Attribution Error”?

In addition, according to cognitive scientist George Lakoff, research has discovered that there is “a vast landscape of unconscious thought—the 98 percent of thinking your brain does that you’re not aware of.”<sup>4</sup> Does it make sense, therefore, to condemn someone who—like all of us—is aware of only two percent of the thoughts and feelings that drive their actions?

Third, I believe it is arrogant to pretend to godlike omniscience and claim to fully understand the contributions of all of the above-cited variables affecting an individual’s actions. Human understanding is necessarily limited. Moreover, as the authors remind us many times, any one of us might do horrible things in the “wrong” situation. Lastly, not only does a focus on individuals at the bottom of the chain of command obscure the responsibility of those at the top, but more importantly it diverts attention from the ultimate cause of most mass inhumanity—the systems of power which Zimbardo emphasizes.

Given these objections, perhaps the most desirable road is to focus more on the prevention of mass killing than to waste time in futile debates about “guilt.” As Coloroso wisely points out, forgiveness is a “gift” that victims can give to *themselves*, as part of the process of healing.

All three writers stress that there are always some people who are able to resist the inhumanity that takes place around them, and the authors provide many

examples of such heroes—people who may have led “ordinary” lives until they found themselves in a situation that brought out the best in them. As critical as those actions may be, Zimbardo is right when he says that “disobedience by the individuals must get translated into systemic disobedience” if it is going to have a significant impact (p 459). Such widespread disobedience on the part of US citizens—including those within the armed forces—was one of the main reasons that Washington was forced to end its attack on Vietnam, and why Nixon could not carry out his threats to attack the Vietnamese with nuclear weapons.

Of all the stories of the heroic resistance to the Vietnam war, perhaps the most moving is that of the late Hugh Thompson, Jr., who was a US helicopter pilot in Vietnam in 1968, when he came across the My Lai massacre while it was in progress. As Zimbardo relates the tale:

An estimated 504 Vietnamese civilians were rounded up and killed . . . the soldiers gathered up all the inhabitants of the village—elderly men, women, children, and babies—and machine gunned them to death (some they burned alive, raped, and scalped).

While the massacre was unfolding, a helicopter piloted by Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, Jr. set down to help a group of Vietnamese civilians . . . They saw Captain [Ernest] Medina and other soldiers running over to shoot the wounded. Thompson flew his helicopter back over My Lai village . . . ordered the massacre to stop and threatened to open fire with the helicopter’s heavy machine gun on any American soldier or officer who refused his order. . . . He then ordered two other helicopters to fly in for medical evacuation of the eleven wounded Vietnamese. His plane returned to rescue a baby he had spotted still clinging to its dead mother. (pp 474–475)

Thompson and his crew embodied the appeal made over a decade earlier by Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, when they called on the people of the world to, “Above all, remember your humanity.”<sup>5</sup> Most acts of resistance to evil will not be as heroic as that Hugh Thompson, Jr.. But the most hopeful aspects of these studies are the examples they supply of individuals who, in the most terrible situations, from Auschwitz to Abu Ghraib, remembered their own humanity, as well as that of the people around them.

Peter G. Prontzos © 2009  
Langara College

## Notes and References

- 1 Frans de Waal, *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), p 4.
- 2 William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), p 201.
- 3 Gerald Caplan, “A ridiculously brief history of Rwanda,” *The Walrus*, October 2004.
- 4 George Lakoff, *The Political Mind: Why You Can’t Understand 21st-Century American Politics with an 18th-Century Brain* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2008), p. 3.
- 5 Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, *The Russell-Einstein Manifesto*, 9 July 1955, available at: [www.pugwash.org/about/manifesto.htm](http://www.pugwash.org/about/manifesto.htm).

### **Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for the Genocide Convention**

John Cooper

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

338 pp, \$74.95 (hbk)

The genocide-studies community, and other interested readers, have waited a long time for a truly first-rate biography of Raphael Lemkin. We are still waiting, but John Cooper's book, though only adequate, fills a gap and provides a detailed and often engaging account of Lemkin's quest to enshrine the crime of genocide in international law.

Early chapters of Cooper's book address Lemkin's childhood in Poland; his turn to law in the 1920s; his struggle to articulate the notions of "vandalism" and "barbarity" that were important markers en route to his culminating theory of genocide; his escape from invading Nazi armies; and his final sojourns in the United States. The biographical account adds little to Samantha Power's somewhat more vivid sketch in *"A Problem from Hell."* But Cooper does present a portrait of Lemkin as a questing and probing spirit, as well as offer a poignant image of him marooned in Lithuania prior to finding refuge in the US:

Raphael Lemkin pondered his fate as a refugee—the enforced idleness, the loss of self-esteem, and the constant swallowing of the bread of affliction, meals always eaten at someone else's table. There were three things that Lemkin had always dreaded[:] wearing spectacles, losing his hair and becoming a refugee. Now all three had come to pass and at the age of 39 he was beginning to feel middle-aged. (pp 34–35)

Rescue was at hand, in the form of a Swedish visa and a job offer from Duke University in North Carolina. Once settled at Duke, of course, Lemkin devoted himself single-mindedly to promoting his genocide concept, and lobbying for an international convention to confront the "crime of crimes." The long campaign in which Lemkin first secured a hearing, then spurred the United Nations to draft the Genocide Convention and a critical mass of countries to ratify it, and finally worked to expand the circle of ratifiers, constitutes the heart of Cooper's book (chapters 4–14). It's a solid overview, enlivened by illustrations of Lemkin's remarkable ability to craft messages designed to appeal to particular UN delegates, and above all to avoid ruffling national sensitivities. For example, "Lemkin carefully avoided upsetting the Arab supporters of the genocide convention by . . . not singling out the fate of the Jews during the Second World War" (p 147). He likewise skated over Turkish crimes against the Armenians when wooing the Turkish government. And he was a grand flatterer. To the Mexican Ambassador to the UN, Padilla Nervo, Lemkin wrote: "Certainly, the great humanitarian tradition of your country, and the great prestige of its leaders throughout Latin America, in the United Nations, and in the world at large, qualifies Mexico as a natural champion and leader for the genocide convention" (p 178). To the Haitian Foreign Minister, Dr. Vilfort Beauvoeur, Lemkin eloquently declared: "Your ancestors, Excellency, were brought as slaves to this hemisphere. They were tortured and beaten; now you are a free people . . . Your government should

be in the forefront of this action” (p 179). Meanwhile, in correspondence with a representative of the same French nation that had once enslaved the Haitians, Lemkin argued that “Quick ratification by France would start a strong ratification movement in the entire world because every country looks to France for guidance in matters of international law and new ideals” (p 181).

Lemkin also displayed the norm entrepreneur’s ability to exploit unexpected opportunities. “While relaxing one weekend at the Castlebrook Inn at Westbrook, Connecticut,” writes Cooper,

... Lemkin noticed an item in a Sunday newspaper that a Congress of Latin American Universities was meeting in Guatemala City. Among the organizers were Dr Carlos Martinez Duran, the rector of the University of San Carlos in Guatemala, and Menez Pereira, the President of Panama University, who had represented his country at the United Nations in 1946 and had supported the passing of the resolution on genocide. Lemkin cabled the Congress, asking them to endorse the Genocide Convention and they adopted a resolution on 22 September 1949 to this effect which was sent by the delegates to their Foreign Ministers. Many university presidents became adherents of the cause and started to campaign for the ratification of the treaty in their own countries. (p 177)

Cooper has ably researched Lemkin’s manuscripts and correspondence; he has unearthed a variety of anecdotal nuggets, and effectively incorporated materials already cited by sources like Power and William Korey. I missed a more serious exploration of Lemkin’s paradoxical opposition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which he felt was unnecessary and unworkable, and distracted attention from his own pet project). Otherwise, Cooper seems to touch most of the important bases. He also deserves credit for his close reading of the genocide-studies literature. He draws on recent research by Mark Levene and Dirk Moses to show how Lemkin’s roots in the “borderlands” of central Europe influenced his passionate interest in ethnic minorities, and how he was additionally able to conceptualize the Nazi genocide as a colonial enterprise, together with Hannah Arendt and long before the sustained contemporary attention to this subject. Cooper’s discussion of the intercession by radical activist William Patterson, who issued a 1951 petition titled *We Charge Genocide* about the plight of southern African-Americans, is energetic and revelatory (see pp 194, 204–205, 224–225). He is also strong on the dimension of cultural genocide in Lemkin’s thinking (pp 276–277). This topic appears to be making a comeback in genocide studies, as reflected in recent work by Martin Shaw and ongoing doctoral research by Pamela De Condappa.

A drawback of Cooper’s interpretation is his regular tendency to overread Lemkin’s motivations, particularly when it comes to the centrality of Judaism and the Holocaust to Lemkin’s self-identity, concept of genocide, and political campaigning. Cooper acknowledges that Lemkin was a non-observant Jew throughout his life, but he continually shoehorns Lemkin into the Judaic tradition, sometimes distractingly. To his credit, he does highlight one very interesting fragment in Lemkin’s unpublished writing. In the *History of Genocide*, to which Cooper devotes two useful chapters, Lemkin refers to “*Jews, that classical*

*victim of genocide*” (p 239, emphasis added). It is a striking statement that suggests Lemkin *may* have accorded Jews and their suffering a special place in his historical schema. Elsewhere, though, Cooper’s attempts to establish a causal connection fall flat. He declares that the ideas of Polish Jewish Professor Simon Dubnov “underpinned Lemkin’s own beliefs, particularly as regards cultural genocide” (p 92), but adduces no real evidence for this sweeping claim. Elsewhere, he records an amusing comment by Lemkin about the penury to which he was reduced in the early 1950s. In struggling for ratification of the Genocide Convention by the US Senate, Lemkin said, he was “pleading a holy cause at the UN while wearing holey clothes” (p 213). It’s probably the wittiest and most rueful statement of Lemkin’s cited anywhere in the book, but Cooper rather ludicrously drafts it to serve his portrayal of Lemkin as essentially Jewish in his orientation: “His enlisting [*sic*] his cause as a holy one suggests the fact that despite his sophisticated and secular education, Lemkin still had a Jewish way of looking at the world” (p 213; for a similarly dubious overinterpretation, see p 232).

The image of Lemkin the human being remains somewhat remote. Cooper captures Lemkin’s turn to a more volatile and paranoid frame of mind late in his life: “The more his *alter ego*, the Genocide Convention, was attacked, the more Lemkin reacted outrageously,” expressing “cold hostility” towards longtime friends; “he lacked the ability to trust” (pp 194, 217). But we get only tantalizing glimpses of, and from, the individuals who passed through Lemkin’s professional and personal life during this period. Cooper tells us, for instance, of the law students who would cluster around Lemkin at Yale during his 1948–51 teaching stint there: “on balmy spring nights, Lemkin would have long discussions with his students and their friends in the Yale Quadrangle, often captivating his listeners” (p 120). In class, meanwhile, he would “rang[e] widely over [genocide’s] cultural, psychological and economic implications, and provoking his students into asking many questions and engaging them frequently in ‘searching conversations’” (p 173). Surely a good number of these students are still alive; might they be tracked down and interviewed for their recollections? What about some original research into Lemkin’s early life? We know only what is in his unpublished autobiography. But Cooper’s research, though creditable, is limited to the library. The field remains open for a writer more interested in original investigation, and perhaps with better funding, to shed new light on diverse aspects of Lemkin’s life and career. One hopes it will be a sharper writer, as well. Cooper has his stylish moments, but his prose is sometimes erratic, and the editing of the volume is sloppy. There are numerous typos and comma-splices which a proofreader should have caught, and it is a little disconcerting to see the title of Lemkin’s 1944 volume rendered twice in two pages as *Axis Control in Occupied Europe* (pp 54–55).

Students and scholars of genocide studies will broadly welcome John Cooper’s attempt to provide a coherent and concise overview of Raphael Lemkin’s extraordinary life and career. One hopes that the publisher will see fit to issue the volume in paperback, to render it more suitable for course use and accessible to a general readership. One hopes, as well, that its flaws will inspire others in our

field to bolster an emerging strand of “Lemkin studies,” and fill in some of the gaps left in Cooper’s account.

Adam Jones © 2009  
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**Savage Constructions: The Myth of African Savagery**

Wendy C. Hamblet

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008

248 pp, \$29.95 (pbk)

Several years ago, Wendy Hamblet sat down across from a man of considerable intellect and academic accomplishment in his well-appointed university office. After making small talk for a few minutes, the two began to discuss Hamblet’s primary research focus: atrocities committed by man against his fellow man, especially in developing countries. The response of this well-respected man was that “*these people* have always been killing each other . . . It’s just the way *these people* are” (p x). It left Hamblet completely aghast, and became the genesis for her latest work, *Savage Constructions: The Myth of African Savagery*. Armed with the mantra that “Violence begets violence,” Hamblet boldly undertakes the cause of clarifying the origins of what seems to be a perpetual cycle of brutality and bloodshed in Africa.

The book is largely based on philosophical concepts, in which Hamblet is well versed. However, to accommodate those not familiar with this subject, the first two chapters are spent building a framework with a brief historical overview of colonial violence and the author’s theory of “rebounding violence.” Hamblet also introduces the concept of phenomenology, the idea that human beings encounter universal experiences and that “there exists a shared and undeniably ‘human’ response to the most wrenching tragedies of life” (p 28). While she admits that this philosophical approach, founded by Edmund Husserl, is fundamentally flawed because it distills the entirety of human experience into “shared” responses, Hamblet contends that when considered through the lens of Emmanuel Levinas, “each ego [is] utterly sovereign and unique” (p 31), permitting individual responses to “shared” human experience. Knowing that experiences and their reactions are common for humanity as a whole should evoke empathy and “promote a sense of responsibility for suffering others” (p 56), according to the author. By debunking myths about the supposed predisposition to violence of the African continent, she wants to enlighten the reader about the similarities of humankind, and potentially avoid the common misconceptions about race, violence, and developing countries that are apparent even in academia.

After establishing the philosophical basis, Hamblet spends several chapters recounting the history of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial violence in Africa, in an effort to buttress the basic principle that historically, “without

apology, African labors have ... been extracted and exploited" (p 85). These chapters offer few specific, geographically-based examples of the arguments she makes about religion, the origins of the slave trade, and the cultural identity of African peoples. Instead, they remain broad, in keeping with the universality of the human condition established in chapter two.

The third section of the book focuses on the specific historical constructions of Africans from multiple viewpoints, including anthropology, religio-medical studies, and African self-definitions. With regard to the last, Hamblet traces the development from an independent, astute mental self-conceptualization to the victim mentality inherited by the subjugated peoples of the continent. She points out that only "rarely did the colonists try to help the Africans along the road to any of civilization's benefits, not to political adeptness, nor economic prosperity, nor social well-being. The relationship was merely exploitive" (p 178). Generations of Western myths passed by people who never ventured to Africa perpetuated negative stereotypes of Africans in the Western world, while generations of abuse eventually convinced many Africans of their inherited servile status.

In the conclusion of the book, Hamblet outlines her prescription for the problem of the pervasiveness of a false African mythos and its effects on African efficacy. She offers philosophy as "therapy, not for the body, but for the soul" (p 225). The writer agrees with Socrates, who felt that philosophy could "heal the human ills of injustice" (p 226), and therefore advances it to heal the psychological wounds of tribal affiliations, distorted self-identities, and inaccurate Western conceptions of African peoples. She warns, however, that philosophy "can be deployed to wound as quickly as to heal" (p 226), and should be applied cautiously to avoid inflicting further damage. Hamblet also posits that the future of a healthy Africa can be found in the "peaceful socialism" preached by Mandela, Tutu, and Nyerere. She writes: "Living *humanly* in the African tradition is about village-dwelling in peaceful companionship with folk who are ashamed to possess more than their poorest neighbors" (p 246). This tradition of peaceful coexistence between neighbors, Hamblet suggests, is one of many things that Africa can teach its Western counterparts.

Overall, *Savage Constructions* sets out an interesting philosophical view of the problems created by colonial violence in Africa. The historical base, though, seems lacking. Though the writer employs the technique and viewpoint of scholars like Walter Rodney, she does not deploy some of the more recent academic discourse by historians such as John Thornton and Patrick Manning, who offer a more well-rounded dialogue regarding Africans under colonization.<sup>1</sup> Rodney has been accused of denying agency to the people of Africa in their past, present, and future situations—effectively reducing them to children who cannot act, but only be acted upon. By relying so heavily on Rodney's theory, Hamblet sometimes does the same, effectively undermining her arguments about human equality by perpetuating myths of African childishness.

Another writer that Hamblet relies heavily upon is the Polish chemist and Jewish Holocaust survivor Primo Levi, to demonstrate the ways that violent actions can dehumanize subjects and perpetuate themselves indefinitely. In his

essay “The Gray Zone,” Levi strongly advises against a “Manichean tendency” to see violent situations like genocide in terms of rigid dichotomies.<sup>2</sup> However, Hamblet sometimes seems to do just that, suggesting that “traditional Africans enjoy a sense of deep-rootedness and historical belongingness that the relatively culturally superficial Westerner could never fully appreciate” (p 82), while stating that Westerners resembled their “Indo-European horseback-riding, heavy-armored, male-skygod-worshipping” ancestors (p 22), with only conquest on their minds. Though no-one denies the Western world’s responsibility in the negative aftermath of imperialism, to completely deny any altruistic capabilities of Western states leaves the reader with no understanding of how the writer expects the problems to be alleviated.

To her credit, Hamblet does advance the cause of philosophy’s approach to the moral dilemma of human rights, diaspora, and genocide studies. As scholars like Omer Bartov and John K. Roth have concluded (see the review that opens this section), genocide cannot be fully comprehended until the minds of the perpetrators and victims are assessed and understood. This is a call that the author takes deeply to heart. She points out that not only is the philosophy of the victims and perpetrators important; so, too, is that of the bystanders. Her claim is that the world viewed the 1994 genocide in Rwanda as “superlative living proof of the ‘savagery’ attributed to all Africans” (p 203). This blatant misunderstanding of the people of that nation, and equally of the whole African continent, is the philosophical bias that Hamblet attempts to address in this book. The author’s research on the effects of abuse on the later self-identification of victims is also highly pertinent to scholars of genocide and human rights.

As a supplemental text for those considering the role of philosophy in diaspora, genocide, and human rights studies, *Savage Constructions* merits consideration. It could be especially useful for more advanced students seeking to understand the core connections between philosophy and atrocity. For introductory students, the breadth of Hamblet’s phenomenological approach, and the subsequent generalizations grouping the entire continent of Africa and the entire Western world into opposing categories, make the book challenging. Readers looking to find a deeper history of reactions to colonization in specific geopolitical areas would likewise have difficulty with this volume. Those interested in the application of phenomenology to the effects of violence on the African psyche and social patterns, however, will find Wendy Hamblet’s text a solid contribution.

Megan Lee © 2009  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

### Notes and References

- 1 John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp 4–5; Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp 12–15.
- 2 Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1998), pp 36–45.

**Passage Through Hell: A Memoir**

Armen Anush (trans. Ishkhan Jinbashian)  
 Studio City, CA: Hagop and Knar Manjikian Publications, 2005  
 141 pp, \$18.00 (pbk)

**The Fatal Night: An Eyewitness Account of the Extermination of Armenian Intellectuals in 1915**

Mikayel Shamtanchian (trans. Ishkhan Jinbashian)  
 Studio City, CA: Hagop and Knar Manjikian Publications, 2007  
 77 pp, \$15.00 (pbk)

**Death March: An Armenian Survivor's Memoir of the Genocide of 1915**

Shahen Derderian (trans. Ishkhan Jinbashian)  
 Studio City, CA: Hagop and Knar Manjikian Publications, 2008  
 124 pp, \$15.00 (pbk)

Survivor accounts are an indispensable source for the study of the Armenian genocide. They not only document the immediate impact of the crime on the victim population, but also provide critical information for our understanding of the underlying administrative policies. The publication series founded by Hagop and Knar Manjikian introduces to a wider English-speaking audience the translations by Ishkhan Jinbashian of carefully selected Armenian-language memoirs. The project includes accounts that had been serialized in Armenian newspapers and journals, and thereby remained even less accessible than works published in monograph form. The three volumes published so far document various phases of the deportations covering the area between Constantinople and Der Zor in the Syrian Desert.<sup>1</sup>

Mikayel Shamtanchian (1876–1926), an author and newspaper editor, was one of the Armenian intellectuals and community leaders arrested in Constantinople on April 24, 1915. He wrote his account in spring 1919, shortly after his return home. His detailed memoir of the arrest and deportation to the Tchankiri detention center stands alongside those of Krikoris Balakian and Aram Andonian. Importantly, his account is supported by Ottoman documents available at the Turkish Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives, and he identifies key Ottoman officials directly involved in the arrests and deportation.

At first, those sent to Tchankiri had hoped for imminent release from their political exile, and started a petition campaign to that effect. Contrary to well-established claims, Shamtanchian argued that his arrest *did not* form part of the Armenian genocide. In fact, he stated that the genocide began weeks after his arrest:

One morning at dawn, some two and half months after leaving Istanbul, we get a rude awakening by the police. We're all told to gather in front of the mayor's building at a certain time. The Turkish Genocide of the Armenians has not been unleashed yet. So, rather sheepishly, unsuspectingly, we do as we're told, especially in light of the previous day's announcement that 19 exiles were to go back to Istanbul. (p 35)

## BOOK REVIEWS

Perhaps for lack of better information, he links the start of the killings with the month of Ramadan, when the internees at Tchankiri heard of large-scale massacres and the murder of 52 from their group that had been sent away earlier. In November 1915, Shamtanchian was released, freed to leave Tchankiri and to go anywhere within the empire aside from Constantinople. He ended up in Ushak, observing along his way the takeover of Armenian property in Angora:

Across the length of the marketplace, up to a point which I didn't dare venture, I saw countless Armenian-owned shops that had been plundered and were now put up for rent. There were also Armenian-owned stores that were being auctioned off along with their as-yet unlooted contents. Such stores, which were worth at least a thousand gold pieces each, went for 80 or less, with the bidders often hitting another jackpot when they opened the till and found more money inside than what they had paid to acquire the place. (pp 45–46)

At Eskishehir, he witnessed abandoned Armenian orphans trying to survive around the city's railway hub. At Afion, he watched as the wives of Armenian soldiers who had been exempted from deportation sold their last household items to survive. They were showered with insults and indecent proposals. Clearly, Shamtanchian belonged to a miniscule group of privileged deportees that escaped murder and physical violence.

Shahen Derderian (1907–84) published his memoir in the *Hayrenik Monthly* in Boston, beginning in 1950. The English version of his account has been condensed, and covers the story of his deportation from Sivas to the fringes of the Syrian Desert near Antep. Derderian describes the desperate condition of his community prior to deportation. Many deplored the absence of preparations for self-defense due to the leadership's refusal to follow calls by Murad, an activist with the leftist Hnchak movement:

What's to become of us? Day and night, poor Murad went door to door and begged everyone to arm themselves. And what did our upper crust, our rich and powerful gentlemen, do about such advice? They just scoffed at it as adventurism and wanton criminality. Now Murad is fighting the government from the mountains while those who dismissed his pleas are being butchered in prisons. How is it that even those who preached pacifism were arrested? What did *they* do wrong? Weren't they the ones who advised us not to listen to the partisans? (p 8)

Derderian's detailed account of the deportation shows that the Armenian men of his caravan were not taken away from the group at a specific moment. Instead, gendarmes and "robbers" killed the men and older boys in relatively small numbers at a time. The gendarmes regularly killed older people and young children who could not keep pace with the caravan. The corpses of victims from other caravans lining the way showed Derderian that such crimes were not limited to his group alone. At intervals, officers set up check points extorting money and valuables from their victims for the right to pass by alive. They also registered the remaining men and disposed of those blacklisted. The book details how gendarmes specifically tried to kill young children also:

I was surprised to notice that there were strange movements on the surface of the mounds around me. I didn't understand what was going on. The next day I returned to the spot with a couple of buddies. That's when we discovered the gruesome truth. There were a number of tiny arms and hands sticking out of the earth. They were those of the children who a couple of days ago were taken away on the pretext of being placed in orphanages. The kids were buried alive. (p 58)

Armenian women, for their part, protected boys as best they could to ensure the survival of the family's male line.

Indeed, my brother and I were the only males of the extended family left alive. From that point on, everybody was extra vigilant to make sure we survived. My brother and I were forbidden to leave my mother's sight. Though I felt like a caged animal, such precautions were all too necessary, as the Turkish policemen and their murderous cohorts were once again on a rampage, intent on collecting Armenian boys. (pp 66–67)

Derderian survived by working for a Turkish village elder. His memoir provides geographical information that connects major events to specific locations and allows their precise timing to be established.

Armen Anush (1907–58) published his memoir in 1955, after repeated visits to the Syrian Desert in 1948–55. Near Ras-ul-Ain and Sheddade, he had seen the bones of Armenian victims lying in desert, and spoken to children of Armenian women who had married Muslims in the area during the genocide. Anush had been born in Urfa, where he witnessed the beginning of the Armenians' defense of their quarter. When the defenders retreated from his neighborhood, the family was forced out by Ottoman military. A mob killed all Armenian men and boys aged 10 years and older. His father, one of the defenders, was publicly hanged after surrendering while he himself, his mother, four sisters, and two infant twin brothers, were detained for 15 days before being deported to the desert.

Anush witnessed the self-sacrifice of Armenian women and their desperate resistance. From the start, the gendarmes sought to break the spirit of the deportees. Women, in particular, resisted: "From behind us, a proud female voice shouted, 'May the sultan's bed break apart, may his house turn into ruins, may ...' The last words were drowned in the daring Armenianess' throat, as the stroke of a sword split her head in two" (p 15). On another occasion, six guards, presumably uniformed gendarmes, attempted to rape Armenian women:

Guided with lanterns, the soldiers had meandered among the deportees, picked up six girls, and dragged them to their tent. But the girls had refused to do the soldiers' bidding. In fact, they had fought for their honor and lives. Just then two Armenian women had entered the tent, grabbed a couple of rifles, and killed two of the soldiers. The other soldiers had attacked the women and killed them. They had also murdered all the women gathered around the tent and cut all six girls to pieces (p 23)

A few days later, women again died resisting attackers: "That night 15 girls and young women were taken away from the caravansary. Seven other women, who had attacked the kidnapers, were murdered. One of them was the brave widow

of my uncle. They said the dead behemoth was struck down with her own hands. That stalwart woman had killed the monster with tooth and claw” (p 29). Repeatedly, members of the extended family joined the group on its way to Der Zor. In the end, only Anush and his mother were left. The others had been murdered, succumbed to disease, or committed suicide; children had been taken away, left behind, or surrendered. Two young girls willingly entered a Muslim household to improve their own situation. Anush experienced the horrors of death marching and massacre. “Our caravan was decimated. We merged with other caravans. But the new ones were also decimated” (p 33).

The second part of the memoir details Anush’s and his mother’s survival at Der Zor. While looking for food in the desert, he came across a major killing site. Here, executioners suffocated children in caves, while other deportees were killed after having been undressed. Being caught by the executioners, Anush himself narrowly escaped death when the corpses of murdered women covered him during a massacre. In the deportees’ camp, Anush’s survival at first seemed unlikely. Aside from hunger, thirst, and diseases, solidarity among the victims was at an all-time low: “the newly homeless of the riverside roamed around the deportation camps day and night, perfectly willing to commit murder for a needle or a tattered shirt” (p 93). He and his mother survived due to the intervention of Armenian women who had married local Arabs: “Araksi, the young woman, had helped save the lives of many deportees and . . . right now 21 Armenian women and boys worked for the master throughout his many villages” (p 101). In sum, the memoir provides detailed information on the atrocities in the lower Euphrates region. Importantly, the account matches certain Ottoman administrative directives, thereby adding crucial information on their implementation.

The three accounts add substantially to English language survivor memoir literature. They provide important information that researchers and librarians cannot afford to ignore. The books suffer at times, however, from imprecise translations. Certainly, Shamtanchian did not use the term “genocide” in 1919. An explanatory note by the translator would have been in order here; future editions can clarify such issues.

These books show how deportees developed survival strategies, resisted where possible, collected information, and organized escapes. As publisher Hagop Manjikian told me, the books also document the “deep sense of loss” experienced by all Armenians. Even the most vivid eyewitness accounts by missionaries and other observers fail to capture this important aspect.

*Hilmar Kaiser* © 2009  
*Bangkok*

## Notes and References

- 1 All three books reviewed here are available through the St. Vartan Armenian Bookstore, <http://www.stvartanbookstore.com>.

**And Life is Changed Forever: Holocaust Childhoods Remembered**

Martin Ira Glassner and Robert Krell (eds.)  
 Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2006  
 376 pp, \$29.95

As the number of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust dwindles at an alarming rate, child survivors have begun to play a more pivotal role in the campaigns for Holocaust restitution, as well as in the realms of Holocaust education and written narratives. Indeed, the past decade alone has seen an influx of first-person narratives by child survivors. Several of these works have appeared in anthologies,<sup>1</sup> a number of them sponsored by various child survivor organizations scattered throughout the United States and internationally. A recent contribution in this genre is *And Life is Changed Forever*, edited by Martin Ira Glassner and Robert Krell.

Edited by two emeritus professors and published by an academic press, *And Life is Changed Forever* is one of the more literary and well-structured representations of the genre. The book is divided into treatments of three major child-survivor groups, oriented around an ascending chronology: (I) "Survivors Born after 1935," (II) "Survivors Born 1930–35," and (III) "Survivors Born before 1930." Each section is followed by a commentary by Robert Krell, himself a child survivor from Holland and a licensed psychiatrist who has written widely on the subject of child survivors of the Holocaust. These synopses are all very much steeped in the psychology of human trauma, memory, identity, and resilience of spirit.

An additional merit in the organization of this book is its diversity. The 21 personal narratives span a large array of prewar, wartime, and postwar experiences, and range across 11 different European countries. Other useful features include a "Selective Chronology," 24 specially commissioned maps, and many photographs submitted by the contributors. These aid the reader in retracing the numerous geographic steps the contributors took between Europe and the subsequent continent(s) which they adopted as home.

One of the curious features which the vast majority of the contributors share is that all but three married non-Holocaust survivors. These numbers contradict the findings of psychological and sociological studies, as well as much anecdotal evidence, attesting overwhelmingly to the opposite tendency. One such example comes from Dr. William Helmreich, a sociologist at the City University of New York, who has written extensively about Holocaust survivors and their ability to rebuild their lives following World War Two. According to Helmreich, four out of five survivors married other survivors—"unions which many researchers believe were beneficial to the couples' mental health."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, Dr. Helmreich, whose subjects were primarily *adult* survivors, found that "in interview after interview, survivors said how they appreciated that their spouses could understand their sense of loss and their anxieties."<sup>3</sup> Discrepancies such as these—the choices Holocaust survivors made in choosing their spouses—further highlight the experiential differences between adult and child survivors of the Holocaust.

Let us examine more closely the experiences of some of the individuals represented in this book. Several contributors spent part or all of the war years in hiding, often with a constant fear of being found out, and sometimes in the care of righteous Gentiles, in orphanages and in convents. Most child survivors in this category either did not see one or both of their parents until after the war, or never saw their biological parents again. Such was the case with Marian Neuhaus Nachman, born in Holland in 1938, one of the contributors in Group I. From four to eight years of age, she lived with a Dutch family named the Martens. There, she was brought up as a Catholic child and attended the local convent school, where she was an outstanding student who learned her prayers well. She bonded with her adoptive parents and brothers, only to be handed over after the war to relatives in the United States. Her biological parents had both perished in Sobibor.

Another example is that of Hilde Scheraga, born in Germany in 1930, a contributor to Group II and a former president of the Holocaust Child Survivors of Connecticut (HCSC). During the war, Scheraga was hidden in a Belgian orphanage in which all the other children were Catholic. Nonetheless, she was well-treated, and not forced to attend church services with the other children. Seven years later, at the war's end, she was reunited with her mother, and the following year in the US with her father, who had managed to emigrate on the eve of the war.

Due to these difficult and tragic experiences in their earliest and most formative years—marginalization as Jews; exposure to violence and the threat of death; separation from loved ones at a young age, followed by a period of living with surrogate parents, replaced in turn by other surrogates and/or genuine parents—evidently took its toll on these and other child survivors of the Holocaust. Both Nachman and Scheraga faced challenges pertaining to trust, as well as identity, relationship, and religious crises later on—indeed, throughout their adult lives. Consider the following excerpts, drawn from Nachman's and Scheraga's first-person narratives:

My adjustment to life with the Neuhauses—my uncle and aunt—was problematic. The relationship was difficult. . . . In Holland I was a lighthearted, happy, and outgoing child. I had become a sad, well-behaved, lonely, and timid girl. I was still a young child and feared that even mild misbehavior of any sort might lead to my being taken away again. . . . I remained conflicted for most of my life about the complex relationships and loyalties with the Martens and Neuhaus families . . . I was a pliant and dutiful daughter but seethed inwardly. . . . The trauma of the numerous sets of families and parents that I had during my childhood obviously affected my adult life and still does. The broken bonds were never completely healed. (Nachman, pp. 81–83)

Living with my parents was extraordinarily difficult. We were three individuals who came together as a family that had been irrevocably broken into three pieces. We seemed to come from different planets. We did not speak to each other in any meaningful way . . . I was desperate to return to Belgium and to the orphanage that I regarded as my true home. . . . I had learned in the orphanage to be master of my own fate. I learned not to rely on others for my mental state. Relying on others proved too painful . . . I believed that my future lay in not needing anyone to love. I was very proud of this resolution. (Scheraga, pp 135–136)

Although there was a difference of eight years between these contributors, and in the fact that Scheraga was reclaimed after the war by her biological parents while Nachman was not, the similarity of their language attests to a wealth of shared experience. This is evident as well in the area of religion and religious identity:

I studied for my first Communion and was devastated to learn that the church would not permit me to go through with it. The priest could not allow the Communion, because he was aware that I was a Jewish child. It was a low point in my life . . . I was six years old and really looking forward to the whole festive occasion – an important milestone in a Catholic’s life . . . I learned at that moment that I was an outsider. I had come to believe that I was a real member of the family and did not understand why I could not participate fully in this ceremony. (Nachman, pp 77–78)

I also had real problems with being Jewish. I had let my parents know that I would not marry a Jew, that I was against all religions. Religions only caused evil and suffering. Why should I adhere to any of them? Doing so would make me an accomplice to the miseries of the human condition. I felt that the world would be a much more humane place if all religions were abolished. Why should anyone suffer because of religious affiliations? (Scheraga, p 136)

These sentiments again echo each other. They convey an ambivalence and conflict surrounding Judaism as a reminder of their “otherness,” and with religion in general as the fundamental root of the evil which afflicted their lives and those of their loved ones. Yet neither, apparently, left the Jewish faith or married non-Jews, even if they did ultimately choose not to live observant lifestyles. This is a theme common to several other contributors to this book.

In spite of, and perhaps because of, their early traumatic experiences, child survivors—like adult survivors—often succeeded exceptionally well in their adopted countries. This was especially true in the educational and professional realms. According to Robert Krell,

Nearly all the child survivors in this book, even some of the oldest ones, felt compelled to achieve as much as possible intellectually after their liberation. They strived to begin, resume, or complete their formal education, often under most stressful conditions . . . Because they had been deprived of education, their appetite for it insatiable, as was their need to appear to be “normal,” which they associated with achieving professional success. (pp 209–210)

One of the major questions that remains is how the child survivors performed as parents, and more recently as grandparents. How have they dealt with parenting, when they frequently encountered severe trauma and lacked one or more parental role models during the most formative years of their lives? According to Krell (pp 335–336), comparatively little is known about this subject, but recent strides have been made, mostly by researchers in psychiatry, psychology, and clinical social work.<sup>4</sup>

The testimonies gathered in *And Life is Changed Forever* provide ample testament to the truth expressed in the title. These were transformative experiences. However, the fact that survivors made conscious decisions to pursue higher

forms of education and meaningful careers, to marry and bring forth children in a world which they knew to be far from benign, is a testament to their inner resilience and a refusal to succumb to the demons of their youth. As well, the fact that these survivors became involved with an organization such as the Holocaust Child Survivors of Connecticut (HCSC), and chose to contribute to this volume rather than remaining silent about their experiences, signals a therapeutic and cathartic process. In the canon of first-person Holocaust narratives, this is a book that will not soon be forgotten.

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YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

### Notes and References

- 1 This includes the following works: Paul Valent, *Child Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002); Kerry Bluglass, *Hidden from the Holocaust: Stories of Resilient Children Who Survived and Thrived* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); and Robert Krell *et al.*, *Child Holocaust Survivors: Memories and Reflections* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2007).
- 2 Daniel Goleman, "Holocaust survivors had skills to prosper," *The New York Times*, 6 October 1992.
- 3 Goleman, "Holocaust survivors."
- 4 Krell cites a study that he and two colleagues carried out in 2004 on this subject: see "Child survivors as parents: a transgenerational perspective," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* Vol. 74, No. 4, October 2004, pp 502–508. See also Abraham Sagi-Schwartz *et al.*, "Attachment and traumatic stress in female Holocaust child survivors and their daughters," *American Journal of Psychiatry* Vol. 160, 2003, pp 1086–1092.

### **The Nazi Ancestral Proof: Genealogy, Racial Science, and the Final Solution**

Eric Ehrenreich

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007

234 pp, \$34.95 (hbk)

I begin this review by citing two other reviews of *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*. In the online forum H-German, Peter Fritzsche calls Ehrenreich's book "an excellent contribution to our understanding of everyday racism in the Third Reich," showing how the holding of an "ancestral proof" (*Ahnenpass* or *Ariernachweis*) by millions of Germans was the culmination of a history of anti-semitism, racism, and eugenics that had been evolving in tandem since 1870. By contrast, Richard Weikart, writing in the *German Studies Review*, while praising Ehrenreich's explication of Nazi "ancestral proof," criticizes him for offering an incomplete presentation—the history of the ancestral proof is, in Weikart's opinion, not sufficiently contextualized in Nazi eugenics—and rejects his argument that scientific racism legitimated but did not lead to the Holocaust. That two reviewers can provide such markedly different assessments of the book suggests that something interesting is going on. And indeed, whether one agrees with Ehrenreich or not, his book is worth reading.

On the face of it, Ehrenreich provides a history of the racialization of genealogy in the Third Reich, and how it came to be that many millions of Germans ended up carrying a "racial pass"—a document that acquired increasing importance in order

to enjoy any kind of normal life in Nazi Germany. This is a worthy aim, and one that seems to fit neatly with the current historiographical trend of stressing the significance of race above all for understanding Nazism. It also complements books such as Fritzsche's *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (2008),<sup>1</sup> by emphasizing that the history of racial genealogy proves "the German population's massive compliance" (p xiv) with the Nazi regime. Following two chapters on "racist eugenics" in Imperial and Weimar Germany, Ehrenreich's history of the Reich Genealogical Authority is trenchant and concise. Yet there is rather more going on here than simply filling a gap in the historiography of race and the Nazi "consensus dictatorship." Also at stake—and the source of the disagreement between Fritzsche's and Weikart's assessments—is the role of race science in the Holocaust.

Ehrenreich provides a useful service by showing how the requirement for Germans to hold an *Ahnenpass* grew out of longstanding trends in racial science. This became increasingly influential in Germany in the first half of the 20th century, even as it began slowly to decline in influence elsewhere in Europe (though this trend should not be exaggerated). But he also makes a quite surprising move by suggesting that the strength of this race-science paradigm lay not in its scientific credentials in the strict sense, but in the fact that it was but one site—albeit a socially and culturally privileged one—exemplifying the widely-shared cultural desire to believe in racial ideas. Reaching far beyond the realm of science, Ehrenreich argues that scientists and the German population at large "wanted to believe that racist ideas had been fundamentally proven" (p xii).

The argument is convincing at the level of the creation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, a hereditarily healthy and putatively racially homogeneous population. A harder question concerns how to link compliance with Nazi racial genealogical requirements to Nazism's most infamous racial policy: the genocide of the Jews. Ehrenreich's argument wavers somewhat here, but he ultimately concludes that the Holocaust was not an outcome of racial science in the way that, for example, the "euthanasia" program was. Rather, the driving force behind the Holocaust was "the idea that Jews were, due to their biology, implacable enemies of non-Jews" (p xvi). What race science did was to contribute to "creating the social conditions for the development and then implementation of genocidal policies" (p xvi).

Ehrenreich argues that there is a distinction between race science in the strict sense and a more virulent, "demonic" anti-semitism; while the former may help to explain the "ancestral proof," the latter is more relevant to understanding the origins of the Holocaust. Following Benno Müller-Hill and others, Weikart suggests that this distinction is overstated. Race scientists did perceive what they were doing as science, and did believe that moral characteristics were hereditary. In their work, claims Weikart, we see a fatal merging of the two sorts of racism that Ehrenreich wants to keep apart.

I take Weikart's point that it is too comforting to contend that Nazi race science was not "real" science. Men like Ernst Rüdin, Otmar von Verschuer, and Eugen Fischer were internationally acclaimed scientists. But Ehrenreich's argument is

suggestive. Nazi Germany does now tend to be seen as a “racial state,” and race science was clearly a key component of the regime. But there was a difference between the supposedly “objective, value-neutral, scientific findings” that underpinned the racial laws—it goes without saying that Ehrenreich does not believe that they really were objective—and “the fiendish antisemitic stereotypes concurrently promoted by the regime” (p 166). Ehrenreich correctly notes that the removal of a perceived racial pollutant does not necessarily entail genocide; nor does it explain the virulent targeting of one group in particular, the Jews. Ehrenreich is, I think, correct to say that “racist eugenic ideology could not, in reality, have been the fundamental rationale for the Nazis’ genocidal policy against Jews. Clearly, the actual justification for the genocide was the other widespread allegation about Jews in Nazi Germany: that they were ontologically evil entities” (pp 167–168).

In accepting this claim, it does not follow that one exculpates or plays down the significance of race science and eugenics in Nazi Germany—although it would have been helpful if Ehrenreich had developed the idea by explaining his disagreement with, for example, Henry Friedlander over the question of links between the T4 program and the murder of the Jews. We know enough about those traditions to see that they were considered real science (and not just in Germany), and that they were utterly immersed—and helped to create—the values that underpinned the Third Reich. But, as Ehrenreich usefully points out, race science, illogical though it was, was not the same as a paranoid conspiracy theory, the essential content of which moved well beyond race-scientific debates about what constituted a “race” and what a “*Volk*.” Race science legitimized the Holocaust; it did not cause it.

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### Notes and References

- 1 Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2008).

### **Radio sam svoj seljacki i kovacki posao: Svjedocanstva genocida**

(I was working at my farmer’s and blacksmith’s job: Testimonies of genocide)<sup>1</sup>

Djuro Zatezalo

Zagreb: Srpsko kulturno drustvo “Prosvjeta,” 2005

386 pp, € 20.00

In his article “The Treblinka Hell,” Vasily Grossman reasoned that it was the terrible duty of a writer to tell the truth. Elie Wiesel said similarly: “Because if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices.”<sup>2</sup> As a researcher-historian, Dr. Djuro Zatezalo has taken upon himself this terrible duty to tell the truth and to remind us, and teach new generations, not to forget.

The genocide of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, in the so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH) during the Second World War, was organized and perpetrated by the Ustasha—the Croatian ultra-nationalist fascists. This was a genocide par excellence. It was based on ethnicity and religion; it was planned, organized, and deliberately perpetrated upon defenseless civilians, regardless of age and gender. By means of terror, torture, and indescribable cruelty, close to half a million victims were murdered in the four years of war between 1941 and 1945.

The bulk of this book consists of a large number (some 317 pages) of testimonies by survivors and witnesses that the author has painstakingly collected over many years of research. Zatezalo was for 30 years director of the Historical Archive in Karlovac—the institution he had helped to build and to organize. Essentially, Zatezalo is not theorizing about genocide; nor is he accusing anyone. He is simply rescuing the evidence. It is also significant that the materials in this book (interviews, accounts of survivors, testimonies, documents, and lists of execution sites), are related and restricted to specific regions in Croatia: Kordun, Banija, Lika, and Gorski Kotar. Thus, they do not cover the genocidal massacres in other parts of wartime Croatia (NDH), such as Slavonija, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, and the part of Srijem under NDH control. Zatezalo has also provided an effective four-page foreword and a few pages of explanations of the long list of mass-killing sites, karst pits, and ravines into which the victims were thrown by their executioners. In all, the precise geographic locations of 337 sites are listed, of which 121 were *bezdanke* or bottomless karst pits. Today, says Zatezalo, most of these execution sites are either inaccessible or unmarked, and even those modestly signified by tombstones were demolished in the 1990s.

Another widely circulated contention is that the Yugoslav communist regime under Tito in fact discouraged research on Ustasha massacres of Serbs for the sake of “brotherhood and unity”; Zatezalo shares this opinion. In this he is probably correct. However, by stating that had this research not been undertaken, the new crimes 50 years later would never have happened, he carries his point too far. The causes of Yugoslav disintegration and the bloody fratricidal wars in the 1990s were far more complex than that. Zatezalo, however, stresses the important fact that the Tudjman regime in Croatia in the 1990s completed the Ustasas’ job by ethnically cleansing Croatia of Serbs, who over five years were reduced from 13 percent to 4 percent of the population.

From a critical perspective, one could point out that precise sources for some interviews are not always supplied. Thus, for instance, in the case of Ljuban Jednak, the only survivor of the infamous Glina church massacre in 1941, several versions of his testimony exist. In one, Jednak gave an estimate of some 700 men massacred, while Zatezalo gives the figure of 1,564, while failing to provide the source. The testimony of one of the perpetrators of this massacre was given while he was under investigation by authorities in Belgrade. His account describes several consecutive nights of killing in the Orthodox church, while citizens of Glina talked of a single-night event. Is this statement therefore reliable? We do not know, and Zatezalo does not explain.

## BOOK REVIEWS

The somewhat puzzling title of this book requires explanation. The words come from one of the Ustasha killers, who at the end of the war survived and managed to join Tito's partisans. He was allowed to work peacefully as a blacksmith and farmer, as if nothing had happened. For this reviewer, a shocking discovery came in the statement of a survivor alleging that the judge of the County Court in Karlovac (Niko Lasic) following the Second World War was an accomplice in the killing of Serb peasants in 1941, and had given the bloody massacre a patina of legitimacy by declaring: "Take them, and kill them, they had been already sentenced" (p 18). I knew this judge personally, and it is hard to believe in the veracity of this statement. If there is substance to this, however, then it and other instances explain why materials of this nature were deemed unfit for publication during the socialist "brotherhood and unity" period in Yugoslavia. In any case, it is significant that a book with such a theme could be published in contemporary Croatia, even after the terrible conflicts in the 1990s and the nationalistic euphoria which accompanied them.<sup>3</sup>

Zatezalo's book is a powerful testimony to the scarcely-believable enormity of these state-organized crimes. The narratives of survivors in this volume are sometimes beyond belief. Yet, for those of us who survived and witnessed the unbelievable, this serves as a realistic account left in writing—one to turn to when posterity attempts "to comprehend the incomprehensible."<sup>4</sup>

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### Notes and References

- 1 The title of the book is taken from one of the interviews.
- 2 Wiesel quoted in Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, Oslo, December 10, 1986; included in Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), p 118.
- 3 The most recent book dealing with the Ustasha genocide is Slavko Goldstein, *1941: Godina koja se vraća* (The year 1941, which is returning) (Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2007). Another remarkable book by Prof. Milan Kangrga, carrying the title *Sverceri vlastitog zivota* (Smugglers of their own life), containing a devastating critique of Croatian nationalism, was published in Split in 2002.
- 4 The phrase comes from Marcel Ophüls, the French maker of documentary films, noted for his treatment of Holocaust victims in his film *Hotel Terminus*.