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Laura Jockusch. *Collect and Record!: Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. XV, 320 S. $74.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-976455-6.

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Documenting Destruction

In her illuminating book, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe*, Laura Jockusch reconstructs an important story of a lesser-known form of Jewish resistance, namely, the documentation of persecution and annihilation, known in Yiddish as *khurbn-forshung* (destruction research). As Annette Wieviorka, an eminent French historian of the Holocaust observed, the social and political climate had to change before witness testimony could enter into the public sphere and become a recognizable source of knowledge about the Shoah. This did not happen until 1961, during the Eichmann trial. Only at that point was testimony of a Holocaust witness brought to the fore and positioned in a significant place "beyond its personal meanings," and the survivors' voices received attention extending outside the confinement of the organizations they had established themselves.[1]

Jockusch, having meticulously consulted a number of archives in Europe, the United States, and Israel, reaches beyond the postwar period and identifies the cultural and intellectual roots of efforts to record the plight of European Jewry. The author traces the tradition of Jewish documentation projects to the 1903 Kishiniev pogrom when Simon Dubnow and a group of prominent collaborators, including Ahad Haam, Chaim Nachman Bialik, Meir Dizengoff, and Mendele Moykher Sforim, recorded anti-Jewish violence in eastern Europe of the early twentieth century. They initiated the role of *zamler*, a voluntary collector of various historical sources and artifacts. *Zamlers* were recruited from a wide array of people and engaged to conduct interviews; gather statistical data; collect songs, stories, photographs, and testimonies; report on cultural events; and chronicle daily lives, thus establishing the practice of incorporating social science methods for writing Jewish history.

Ideas and practices that were developed in the decades preceding the Holocaust found their use during the Second World War, most notably, in the work of Emanuel Ringelblum, who established a secret archive codenamed "Oyneg shabes" (Yiddish for "joy of the Sabbath"). Ringelblum enlisted a diverse group of collaborators. Together, they aimed to collect and preserve the cultural remnants of the destroyed Polish-Jewish population.

However, most of Jockusch's attention is devoted to postwar efforts. Whereas before the war a small circle of Jewish intellectuals and activists led the documentation projects, the experience of the Shoah shifted the scope of those attempts. Alongside a few organized archiving groups, countless individuals started recording their experiences after having sensed the unprecedented scale of events unfolding before them. As Ringelblum noted: "'Everybody wrote … Journalists and writers, of course, but also teachers, public men, young people, even children.'"[2] Stemming from that tradition, the postwar projects developed on a much larger scale.

Across postwar Europe, numerous survivors began to report on their experiences and responses to the enormity of the upheaval, often organizing themselves into local historical commissions. Jockusch devotes her three principal chapters to the main centers of survivors' activity in Europe: France, Poland, and displaced persons (DP) camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy. In addition, one chapter discusses the works to build a European platform for *khurbn-forshung* as a separate field of scholarly interest. The chapters on Poland, France, and DP camps reconstruct the painstaking effort to collect historical material, fueled by a desire to preserve the memory of a destroyed people and commemorate them. In the face of great technical and financial difficulties, postwar commissions developed, and refined and focused their research methods, building on the work of their predecessors. By starting her book with a detailed discussion of the prewar *khurbn-forshung* milieu, Jockusch chooses a

similar approach to that espoused by Samuel D. Kassow in his book on Ringelblum and the Oyneg Shabes group. Kassow observes that analysis of the legacy left by the *zamlers* of the Warsaw Ghetto requires an understanding of their intellectual origins, their cultural environment, and the values that shaped them.[3] Jockusch largely succeeds in showing the intellectual continuity between the postwar historical commissions and early twentieth-century activists who "like the earlier documentation initiatives ... largely employed interdisciplinary social science-oriented research methods and sought an eclectic array of sources which reflected or embodied the victims' experience" (p. 187). That aspect of the study is also well served by the appendix where the author lists major participants in the historical commissions and documentation centers, and provides their short biographies.

Jockusch supplements her analysis with a discussion of additional goals that Jewish historical commissions sought to achieve. Aside from claims to historical significance, their efforts served to realize the agenda of legal retribution and material restitution, as well as to seek moral redress for survivors and to combat antisemitism. With great attention to detail, the author carefully traces the development of such institutions as CDJC (Centre de documentation juive contemporaine) in France or CŻKH (Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna; foundation of later ŻIH, Żydowski Instytut Historyczny) in Poland. Moreover, Jockusch discusses at length various aspects of the organizational cultures and politics of these institutions, their financial arrangements, relations with foreign partners and national governments, and developments in internal politics.

In these accounts of attempts to raise public awareness of the Jewish wartime experience, perhaps the most interesting is the comparative aspect of Jockusch's analysis. Students of postwar European history might be interested to learn about unexpected similarities in Jewish documentation projects in France and Poland, given the distinct political climates of the two countries.

In France, Jewish leadership seemed to believe that the Nazis' own accounts provided the most objective picture of the Holocaust, and focused their efforts on reaching the wider public. The CDJC did not employ social science methods, and used materials of largely non-Jewish provenance. Jockusch convincingly describes how CDJC focused on Jewish contribution to resistance, thus aligning with the dominant French postwar discourse that viewed Vichy as a "historical error." In their quest for reintegration into French society, French Jewry sought to reinforce the national narrative of republican commitment to egalitarian and civic values. As Jockusch argues, commemoration efforts undertaken in Paris, which resulted in the Tomb of the Unknown Jewish Martyr, not only epitomize the CDJC's pursuit but also prove that the organization "succeeded in claiming a public space for memorializing victims of the Holocaust" (p. 82).

As their French counterparts, the Jewish historical commissions in Poland made various attempts to bring the Holocaust into the public consciousness. Jockusch identifies and skillfully describes the main difference between approaches in Poland and France. The Polish Jewish commissions placed an individual at the center of research activities. Despite the specter of renewed antisemitism in Poland, significantly more attention was devoted to survivors' voices and their description of the Jewish experience. Employing interdisciplinary methods, documentation projects in Poland gathered an eclectic array of sources. They sought to reflect the diversity of victims' fate, and recorded testimonies from a wide range of the population, including children. Nevertheless, as Jockusch convincingly demonstrates, like in France, Jewish commissions in Poland attempted to universalize the Jewish experience and prove that Jews were the country's loyal allies and legitimate members of Polish society.

The comparative aspect of Jockusch's analysis could perhaps gain from the discussion of the development of commemoration efforts in Poland. Whereas the French Tomb of the Unknown Jewish Martyr is discussed in much detail, Nathan Rapaport's monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters is mentioned only in passing. Distinct political circumstances notwithstanding, a comparative analysis of those two commemoration initiatives could enrich the book's insights on topographies of Holocaust memory in France and in Poland.

Jockusch's publication sheds some much-needed light on the emergence of a culture of *khurbn-forshung*, including its prewar origins, which are rarely discussed in this context. Moreover, the book explores the political goals of the early documentation projects and demonstrates how, shortly after the war, survivors fought for justice and restitution and against antisemitism. Jewish historical commissions and documentation centers were forebearers in employing social science methods in collecting their sources, as the decades to come were dominated by perpetrator-focused historiography of the Holocaust. The evidential strength of sources created by victims and survivors has had an impact on scholarship to this day, and Jockusch's work significantly enhances our understanding of them. Also, the great value of *Collect and Record!* lies in a clear demonstration of how the

early documentation projects had preceded later quests to break the public silence about the nature of Nazi persecution of European Jewry, and the role of local governments and populations in that crime.

Notes

[1]. Anette Wieviorka, "The Witness in History," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006): 391.

[2]. Ibid., 386.

[3]. Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Rediscovering a Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto* (London: Penguin Books 2009), 14.

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