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Wolfgang Benz, Barbara Distel, Angelika Königseder. *Nationalsozialistische Zwangslager: Strukturen und Regionen – Täter und Opfer.* Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2011. 416 S. ISBN 978-3-86331-065-3.

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W. Benz u.a. (Hrsg.): Nationalsozialistische Zwangslager

The analytical framework of the "nationalsozialistischen Zwangslager", while yet to be embraced by researchers beyond Germany's borders - and rather resistant to elegant and accurate translation - has gained currency of late within German academia. Precisely its breadth, and the perspectives it offers regarding continuities and similarities across different institutions and periodisations pertaining to the history of National Socialist Germany, account for much of its present popularity. See for example the use of the concept of the 'coercion camp' in recent conferences and publications: 19. Workshop zur Geschichte und Gedächtnisgeschichte der NS-Konzentrationslager: "Stigmatisierung - Marginalisierung - Verfolgung" / 19th Workshop on History and Memory of NS Concentration Camps: "Stigmatisation - Marginalisation - Persecution", <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/termine/id=21009> (18.10.2013); Janine Doerry / Alexandra Klei / Elisabeth Thalhofer / Karsten Wilke (eds.), NS-Zwangslager in Westdeutschland, Frankreich und den Niederlanden. Geschichte und Erinnerung, Paderborn 2008. While no neologism of the book under review - indeed the term was used fully three decades ago in a study of Berlin camps - its use here as a unifying concept is nevertheless timely. Helmut Bräutigam / Oliver C. Gliech, Nationalsozialistische Zwangslager in Berlin I: Die 'wilden' Konzentrationslager und Folterkeller 1933/34, in: Wolfgang Ribbe (ed.), Berlin-Forschungen II, Berlin 1987, pp. 141-178.

The present volume adds to what already represents a monumental achievement in what has come to be known as 'KZ-Geschichte', namely the nine-volume series *Der Ort des Terrors*, itself complemented by the fourteen-volume *Geschichte der Konzentrationslager 1933-1945*, their combined aim nothing less than a complete history of the Nazi concentration camps. Wolfgang Benz / Barbara Distel (eds.), Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager, 9 Bde., München 2005-2009. The book under review arose out of the September 2010 conference at the Topographie des Terrors in Berlin, marking the completion of the former series by exploring Nazi 'coercion camps' more generally (p. 9). The conference papers have been faithfully presented here, indeed their sequence in the book follows the running order in which they were presented on the day. The sense the reader has when reading the book, that the main impetus behind its conception had been simply to deal with topics not yet covered in the aforementioned series, is perhaps half-conceded by the editors when they write that the intent with this volume is "Desiderate [...] zu zeigen und auf den weiteren erheblichen Forschungsbedarf, aber auch auf erinnerungspolitische Lücken aufmerksam zu machen" (p. 9).

In keeping with the memorialisation imperative alluded to above, the volume presents seventeen articles plus two survivor testimonies, the latter pertaining to Belzec and the Minsk ghetto. The contributors, overwhelmingly German scholars at German institutions, vary largely in terms of their experience in the field, with authors of decades-long experience sharing space with doctoral students. Their essays are spread across five broadly-defined subsections devoted to 'Regionen', 'Interessen und Kategorien', 'Täter', 'Forschung, Ahndung, Rezeption' and, somewhat strangely given this is avowedly the theme of the volume as a whole, 'NS-Zwangslager'. As with all edited collections, the standard varies, and it is unsurprising that among the best-realised essays are those covering aspects of topics which have already been the subject of book-length treatments by the same authors, such as the contributions of Marc Buggeln and Habbo Knoch.

The explicitly-stated rationale behind the use of the 'Zwangslager' paradigm here is that, the editors argue, for all the diversity encompassed by the term, 'Zwangslager' were nevertheless perceived as concentra-

tion camps, narrowly defined, by their victims, as well as often, in practice, being little different from the Konzentrationslager proper in terms of their organisation, guard force, and conditions inside (p. 9). Yet some readers may feel that rather too many differences are being collapsed here, even as the authors exhaustively enumerate the detail of shifts in institutional control, prisoner population, and so on.

While space precludes detailed discussion of all of the essays here, some examples may suffice. Thomas Irmer examines the over 200 'Arbeitserziehungslager' (AEL) in the Reich and the occupied territories combined, holding some half a million prisoners; a neglected area of research, within which Irmer's specific subject, the six AELs located within pre-existing concentration camps, is still less known. The key feature of the AEL, Irmer contends, was that their prisoners were released after a brief spell; yet even this, arguably their only major unifying factor, was not consistently applied (p. 80). Such exceptions to the rule inevitably raise questions of definitions; if ultimately the only common denominator of the 'Zwangslager' was that they operated outside legal norms, arguably regular prisons should have been included within this rubric, not least because they, too, shared at times those 'concentration camp-like' conditions elsewhere cited as decisive by the editors (p. 9).

Mario Wenzel, considering forced labour camps for Jewish prisoners in occupied Poland and the Soviet Union, notes some 750-800 such camps existed in 1939-44, holding an estimated total of 265.000 Jewish men, women and children. In common with other essays included here, Wenzel's article focuses strongly upon the institutions, chains of command, and responsible agencies involved in running these camps. Again the reader is struck by dissimilarities with the concentration camps. The make-up of guard forces in these camps corresponded to the lack of a central coordinating and decision-making authority; a shortage of personnel meant that some camps were left unguarded overnight (pp. 240-1), in Krakow 'most', Wenzel writes, were left unattended (p. 245) - inconceivable for concentration camps or death camps in the same period. Wenzel carefully delineates the variety of organisations contributing to the guard forces of the camps, with a glut of figures and statistics but nothing on the background and motivation of guards, despite the title of the article seeming to gesture in that direction.

In one of the briefer articles in the book, Barbara Distel discusses criminal and 'asocial' prisoners as a category, noting the continuing lack of knowledge regarding such victims of the Nazi regime (p. 196). Such claims are true up to a point - new research, perhaps published too late to be considered by Distel, is currently expanding our knowledge of criminals and 'asocials' in the camps. See for example Julia Hörath, Terrorinstrument der "Volksgemeinschaft"? KZ-Haft für "Asoziale" und "Berufsverbrecher" 1933 bis 1937/38, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 60 (2012), pp. 513-532. The assertion is less sustainable when one considers studies published outside Germany, such as Victoria Harris' work on prostitutes. Victoria Harris, The Role of the Concentration Camps in the Nazi Repression of Prostitutes, 1933-9, in: Journal of Contemporary History 45 (2010), pp. 675-698. Distel cites exclusively German-language scholarship published - with one exception - in Germany, and her article largely summarises the findings of those works, offering fewer new insights on the substantive points she raises: why, for example, do criminal prisoners remain (even) less studied than their 'asocial' counterparts? Distel usefully highlights the role played by social historians in bringing this aspect of concentration camp history to light (p. 198), remarks which serve as an important reminder also of the continuing need to integrate the history of the camps with the wider social history of the Nazi regime.

Angelika Benz's essay, on juridical 'punishment' (*Ahndung*) of the Holocaust, sees the majority of the text devoted to the trial of former Sobibor guard John Demjanjuk, also the subject of her book, published near simultaneously with this collection. Angelika Benz, Der Henkersknecht. Der Prozess gegen John (Iwan) Demjanjuk in München, Berlin 2011. The trial ran from November 2009 to May 2011, during which the 89 year old 'lag 18 Monate lang in einem Spezialbett neben der Richterbank' (p. 310); Benz effectively conveys the often undignified scenes in the courtroom. The author's high degree of personal investment in this case is manifest throughout, and her article offers extensive quotes and detailed descriptions of proceedings; her own presence throughout as an observer is recorded via a rare appearance of the first person in a German academic article (p. 316). Yet such an approach also lends a highly descriptive character to the essay, and the strong tone of moral outrage - however justified given the crimes discussed in court - is not always matched by sustained analysis. Tantalising references to the protests such trials can occasion (slogans on placards have included 'Lasst die wehrlosen Nazi-Greise in Ruhe', and, 'Nur Deutsche können Kriegsverbrecher sein') are neither explained nor contextualised (p. 304). How Demjanjuk's nationality (Ukrainian, rather than German) im-

pacted upon perceptions of the trial is not a focus here; nor is the role of the age and health of the defendant, acknowledged in passing, in conditioning reactions (p. 317). Not least given Benz's emphasis on the pedagogic role of such trials, an international perspective would have added depth to the discussion of media reaction to the Demjanjuk case, which prompted a great deal of coverage in Britain and the US, as well as in Germany.

These essays, and this volume, thus encapsulate both the considerable strengths and important weaknesses of 'KZ-Geschichte' more generally. The essays here are encyclopaedic in the best sense of the word, scrupulously presenting a wealth of detail on little-known topics. But some also tend towards the encyclopaedic in a more problematic respect, with the facts and figures apparently coming at the expense of sustained analysis and contextualisation; a resolutely narrow focus sees the camps rather isolated from their social and political context. Nevertheless, the various contributors should be praised for the feats of research their essays represent, and have produced a landmark work that is at once an end and a beginning: a welcome coda to the multi-volume histories already published which, as the authors themselves state, also points towards exciting new areas in the history of extra-legal terror under the Nazi regime.

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