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Walter Laqueur, Judith Tydor Baumel, eds. *The Holocaust Encyclopedia.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001. xxxix + 765 pp. $60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-08432-0.

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A one-volume macropedia of the Holocaust

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Within less than six months two books have been published in the United States that attempt to describe the background, history and impact of the Holocaust in the format of a one-volume encyclopedia.[1] The general reader looking for information on the Holocaust today as presented in concise alphabetical form may turn to either of these or yet another encyclopedia in English by Israel Gutman published in four volumes eleven years ago.[2] Whoever wants comprehensive and in-depth information in a fairly condensed form, wants a concentration on issues and the geography of the mass murder, wants the central aspects dealt with at some length and prefers this structure to that of a reference book with short entries trying to cover as many issues, persons, places as possible is best advised to choose this most recent publication edited by Walter Laqueur and Judith Tydor Baumel. The more extensive articles dominate the book and give it the character of a macropedia [3], authoritative in its contents, impressive in its scope, state of the art in research on the Holocaust.

In a sense, this work is more akin to Gutman's four-volume encyclopedia than to the reference work published only a few months earlier. Out of a total of some 300 entries, 116 with a length ranging from one to fourteen pages deal with aspects central to the persecution and destruction of the Jews in Nazi dominated Europe.[4] In this encyclopedia, historical essays are written for each country with a sizable Jewish community. Readers will find entries on Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, each of the Scandinavian countries, one entry covering the Baltic countries, others on France, Spain, Italy, Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Russia and the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Transnistria, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, North Africa and Japan. For Germany, Great Britain, the United States of America and Poland, the editors have chosen to follow a different approach. The position of Jews in Britain and the United States, their reaction and that of the American/British government to the crisis faced by European Jewry are subsumed under the headings of American/British Jewry and American/British policy. What happened to the largest Jewish community in Europe prior to and during World War II, the one in Poland, is outlined in the entry on "Polish Jewry", while a separate five-page article has been reserved for the still highly controversial question of the attitude of the non-Jewish population towards the Jews during the war. The ideological concepts used to define someone as a Jew in Germany and the persecution of these individuals are described in the context of "Nazi policy" and the activities of organizations and policies of "German Jewry".

It appears that editorial rationales were used to guide the selection of issues to be considered more extensively. It would have been helpful, if these reasons had been put forward and explained in the preface. Laqueur mentions the focus on issues and countries rather than personalities, but no reasoning is provided for this decision. In fact, the book offers in-depth information only on four persons, Anne Frank, Adolf Hitler, Rudolf Kasztner and Raoul Wallenberg, without stating reasons for including them and leaving others out.

It is evident, however, that the editors and contributors intend to offer readers a broad perspective of the Holocaust. Thus, the encyclopedia not only outlines Nazi ideology and actions, but also presents the response of peoples in Western and Eastern Europe and the United States to anti-Semitic persecution including responses such as indifference or inability to believe in the intention of killing millions of people and willingness to take part in actions against Jews in towns, ghettos, concentration and death camps. For this reason, and to counter the notion of Nazi victims going to the gas chambers and killing sites like "sheep to slaughter", the encyclopedia also devotes extensive space to Jewish organiza-

tions and their policies, reactions, activities and acts of resistance of Jewish communities and individuals.[5] Associated issues enlarged upon are the "Bund" (General Jewish Workers Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), the "Europa-Plan", "Ghetto Cultural Life", "Illegal Immigration" (into Palestine), the "Jewish Antifascist Committee", "Jewish Youth Movements", "Orthodox Religious Thought", "Resistance in Eastern Europe", "Resistance in Western Europe", to name but a few. Although the term "Holocaust" is usually taken to refer to the mass murder of Jews, the encyclopedia uses the term in a broader sense to include other groups that fell victim to Nazi megalomania and racism. Thus, the persecution of gypsies, homosexuals, and Jehovah's Witnesses are the subjects of three separate entries, the sterilization and murder of so-called "asocials" and the disabled are depicted in connection with the policy of "Euthanasia" in Nazi Germany.

Outlining the history and impact of the mass murder, the encyclopedia simultaneously conveys an idea of the way Holocaust Studies have diversified over the past fifty-five years. Articles such as the ones on "Children", "Jewish Women", the "Death Toll", "Art", "Cinema and Television" and, of course, "Historiography" reflect the changes as well as the addition of new areas of research. In more recent debates the question is discussed whether Jewish women experienced the Holocaust in ways that Jewish men did not, whether children were traumatized in a different way than adults while all of them shared the same hell. Questions like these have been considered marginal for a long time, mainly due to the argument that the Nazis targeted all Jews irrespective of gender or age. Recent studies have shown them as legitimate and important questions that will increase our knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust.[6] The encyclopedia gives readers an idea of the gain to be expected from more differentiated analyses.

Perhaps the most difficult part of every history of the Holocaust is to describe the events in the ghettos and concentration camps. Four of the multi-page entries cover the events in and around Lodz, Riga, Vilna, and Warsaw. The Nazi camps, however, have not been treated individually as in the four-volume encyclopedia edited by Gutman, but the editors have expertly decided to block the information on them in several thematic articles on "Concentration Camps", "Death Toll", "Extermination Camps", "Final Solution: Preparation and Implementation", "Gas Chambers", "Medical Experimentation", "Zyklon B" and other aspects. For obvious reasons, Auschwitz, whose history is appropriately highlighted in a detailed twelve-page (including photographs) account, is a notable exception to this rule.

The encyclopedia's qualities come out best in the essays concerning the ghettos and concentration camps. First, though information is concentrated, it is nonetheless clearly structured, as comprehensive as it should be for everybody interested in deepening their knowledge of this chapter of history. Readers of the gas chambers entry, to take but one example, are told the facts of the killing in mobile and stationary structures, the order of the places where they took place, and each extermination camp operating with gas chambers is discussed separately. Second, whoever turns to the pages on the Nazi camps and the issues connected with them, will soon notice the achievement of the editors and contributors. Although the accounts on the camps, Auschwitz, the Implementation of the Final Solution, and the gas chambers concern the same aspects, there is little if any overlapping or repetition in the text. Third, something which ranges foremost among the qualities of this work, Holocaust history is not reduced to a rather abstract, matter-of-fact–though nonetheless horrifying –description of ideologies, motives, acts of discrimination, violence and murder. On the contrary, some of the perpetrators and firms that took part in persecution and extermination, by giving their name, get a recognizable identity. What is more, the victims of persecution do not appear as a faceless mass, but as individuals with attitudes, hopes, and fears. In being told, for instance, about the experiences of Rudolf Reder (the only survivor of Belzec [p. 232]), of Filip Mueller (surviving member of a Sonderkommando at Auschwitz [p. 236]), of Herman Kruk (p. 255) or Abba Kovner (p. 665) in the Vilna ghetto, readers can understand the Holocaust not solely as a succession of policies and the implementation of systematic mass murder but as something done to individuals, to people who were denied the right to live their lives.

This substantial encyclopedia, the work of the editors and more than one hundred contributors, Jews and non-Jews, eyewitnesses and academics, offers one of the most readable histories of the Holocaust. It should be translated to reach many readers not just those in English-speaking countries.

Notes

[1]. Released last year in October: Robert Rozett and Shmuel Spector, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Facts on File Inc., and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000): 528 pp.

[2]. Israel Gutman, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan 1990). The enlarged and revised German edition comprises four volumes as well: Israel Gutman, Eberhard Jaeckel, Peter Longerich

and Julius H. Schoeps, eds., *Enzyklopaedie des Holocaust. Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europaeischen Juden*, 4 vols. (Zurich, second ed. 1998): 1,912 pp.

[3]. I borrow the term from the printed *Encyclopedia Britannica* that is divided into a "micropedia" of comparatively short entries and a "macropedia" presenting "Knowledge in Depth".

[4]. Gutman's encyclopedia carries about 1,000 entries on 1,905 pages, whereas Rozett and Spector approach the phenomenon in eight essays followed by 650 entries on people, places, organizations, events–plus 300 black-and-white photographs and a chronology–on a total of 528 pages. The assertion that more space means more comprehensive information and therefore a better understanding of a phenomenon is easily refuted when readers compare the entries on "Antisemitism" by Peter Pulzer in the encyclopedia edited by Laqueur which is well-structured, complex and yet readily comprehensible, fascinating to read to the entry by Israel Gutman in the four-volume work.

[5]. It even includes a separate entry dealing with the unwillingness of many contemporaries to acknowledge that systematic mass murder was taking place. Walter Laqueur devotes three pages to this important issue in his entry on the "Final Solution: Public Knowledge" (pp. 201-204).

[6]. Cf. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998). Review in: *Querelles-Net* No. 2, September 2000 (URL: www.querelles-net.de/2000-2/text01.html). Debórah Dwork, *Children with a Star* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1991); more recently: Barbara Bauer and Waltraud Strickhausen, eds., *"Fuer ein Kind war das anders": Traumatische Erfahrungen juedischer Kinder und Jugendlicher im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1999). Review in English to be published online in November 2001 by the "International Network for Interdisciplinary Research about the Impact of Traumatic Experience on the Life of Individuals and Society" (URL: TraumaResearch.Net).

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