

Polish women who fraternized with German nationals, for example, faced the potential risk of being forced into prostitution, both as punishment for their transgression of official policy and as moral judgment regarding their sexual behavior. By highlighting this example, Röger takes a phenomenon that had hitherto “remained a footnote in academia” (39) and places it at the center of her study. Characteristic of the dignity with which Röger handles women’s stories is her emphasis on their individual humanity; women who were trafficked from their hometowns to brothels in other Polish cities had families, meaning that “children were left without mothers, men without wives” (42). The example of forced prostitution also exposes the gendered assumptions that were so foundational to the occupiers’ regulation of sexuality—that men’s active sexual desire was a given and deserved to be sated, and that women’s expression of sexual desire was deemed to be wanton, corrupt, and deviant, and therefore needed to be regulated. The sphere of regulated prostitution is more easily documented than other forms of sexual contact and therefore offers a clearer picture of what daily life may have looked like for Polish prostitutes: how many clients visited certain brothels each day? What did prostitutes get paid? What was their average age and typical class background? Röger answers these questions in a frank, straightforward manner, pointing to gaps in the archives when necessary and noting patterns while avoiding sweeping generalizations.

Röger’s steadfast commitment to nuance is evident throughout the book. Despite clear differences in age, education, and gender privilege—German political power notwithstanding—not all Polish women were victims, and not all German men were perpetrators. Soldiers were not an undifferentiated mass, nor were the women who may have seen those soldiers as their only means of survival when food and money were scarce. Some Polish women recognized the power relations that existed in their country and used them to their and their family’s own advantage. Some were even Nazi sympathizers, and some were declared ethnic Germans by having their names added to the *Volkliste*. Power was not always split according to a gender binary; there were Polish women who exploited underage Polish girls, and there were German occupiers who raped Polish men. This degree of nuance does not lapse into moral relativism, however; Röger makes it very clear to her readers who had more agency, who regulated the public sphere, and who was denied rights. Jewish women are the clearest example of the latter; they were systematically disenfranchised, many were coerced into sex by the Poles who hid them, and many were raped or abused before they were murdered by the Nazis. Röger’s book does not gloss over these facts; it presents readers with individual examples of sexual violence against Jewish women which remind us that occupied Poland was the ground on which the mass murder of Jews was carried out.

Eminently readable, rigorously researched, and thoughtfully constructed, Maren Röger’s book demonstrates how important nuanced studies of sexuality and gender can be for our understanding of one of the most broadly researched eras in German and Polish history and for the silences that followed.

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Nationale Solidarität und ihre Grenzen. Die deutsche “Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt” und der französische “Secours national” im Zweiten Weltkrieg

By Daniel Hadwiger. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2021. Pp. 405. Paperback €64.00. ISBN: 978-3515130257.

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Interest in the Nazi period continues unabated, generating a continuous flow of conventional treatments of familiar topics as well as publications using new interpretive ideas or addressing neglected issues. Daniel Hadwiger's new book falls into the latter two categories.

The author discusses the German National Socialist People's Welfare (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt, NSV) and the French National Relief (Secours national) as a means of comparing social policy in the two countries during World War II. The NSV was founded by the Nazi Party in Berlin in 1931. Two years later, the party's national organization co-opted it to promote the NSDAP's ideological program. The Allies abolished it in 1945. The National Relief was created in France in August 1914 by prominent private individuals to help those suffering due to World War I. It financed its activities through private donations. It was revived in October 1939 to support the French war effort using a combination of private contributions and government subsidies. After the liberation in 1944, it was renamed and reformed. In 1949, it closed down, its purpose having disappeared.

Using these two organizations to analyze social policy is problematic since both were private entities. The welfare state consists of government institutions. Private organizations often complement those institutions but remain distinct from them. The German welfare state comprises three main components: 1. insurance (Versicherung); 2. basic social support based on rights (Versorgung), and 3. social work (Fürsorge). The classic social insurance programs that cover invalidity, old age, sickness, and unemployment fall into the first category. The benefits provided to government officials (Beamte) are examples of the second. Social assistance administered by municipalities is an example of the third. Government programs such as housing construction, education, and public transportation are additional dimensions of the welfare state. The two organizations discussed by the author complemented government activities in the third category. Studying them can add detail to the picture of social services of the two countries but cannot add much to our understanding of the main lines of their welfare state policies.

The distinguishing feature of this work is its comparative approach. Earlier publications concentrated on one organization or the other. The author attempts to add a new dimension to the discussion by applying Louis Althusser's state ideological apparatus thesis, Thomas Etzemüller's social engineering interpretation, transnationalism, inclusion/exclusion, modernization, and women's rights viewpoints, as well as the memory perspective.

The sources for this study suffer from a major weakness. The records of the central offices of both the NSV and the National Relief were lost toward the end of the war. The author partially fills the resulting gaps by using records from select regional archives, sources at the central state archives of the two countries, and an exhaustive reading of the secondary literature.

The author contends that the NSV and the National Relief were central instruments of social policy in their respective countries. They were responses to left-wing social assistance organizations and were social Darwinist. Hadwiger claims that they exemplified the welfare policies of the last phase of the history of national states and that both were typical welfare organizations of the 1940s.

The NSV enjoyed a position of relative strength due to the Nazi military victories of the early part of the war. It had a utopian vision of the future in which it would create a racially perfect society in Germany by ridding the population of undesirables. It came into its own as a disaster relief organization in response to the area bombing of German cities by the RAF Bomber Command. Most of its employees were volunteers who were chosen for their political loyalty. The majority were lower-class women willing to work for little or no pay. The organization was financed from both public and private sources and benefitted from a monopoly on charitable giving bestowed upon it by the government. It also redistributed property confiscated from Jews and political enemies of the regime. The NSV discriminated against Jews and Sinti and Roma. The author contends that it took a class-based view of society, but later suggests that it focused on people's "origins" (Abstammung), 272). He concludes that the NSV was a political charity. After the war, it faded from memory.

The National Relief's position was the opposite of that of the NSV: weakness as a consequence of France's military defeat in June 1940. It cooperated willingly with the Vichy government but was not as politicized as the NSV, nor did it promote a program of lasting social or political change. Like the NSV, most of its employees worked gratis. Unlike the NSV, the National Relief selected employees based on qualifications, most of whom were upper-middle-class Catholic women. It, too, was financed by a combination of contributions, for which it enjoyed a monopoly, and government transfers. Some of its revenues came from expropriations and fines imposed on Jews and political opponents of the Vichy regime. It also received sizeable contributions from France's overseas territories. The National Relief had no explicit policy concerning Jews, though some of its local officials refused to help them on racist grounds. It also discriminated against Gaullists and communists. When choosing beneficiaries, it concentrated on age and place of residence. Hadwiger characterizes the National Relief as a middle-class, Catholic war charity. After 1949, it, too, was quickly forgotten.

The author's thesis that the NSV and the National Relief lay at the center of wartime social welfare policy in their respective countries is untenable. It would be more accurate to say that the two charities played significant supporting roles. The fashionable interpretive ideas used by the author add little to his analysis. *Nationale Solidarität und ihre Grenzen* serves two useful purposes: it offers the reader a convenient way to learn a great deal about the two charities, and it provides us with an example of the hazards of presentism.

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Birds of Prey: Hitler's Luftwaffe, Ordinary Soldiers, and the Holocaust in Poland

By Philip W. Blood. Stuttgart: ibidem, 2021. Pp. xv + 484. Paperback €39.90. ISBN: 978-3838215679.

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The title of this book is slightly misleading. The volume focuses primarily on the *Luftwaffe's* little-known role in World War II in fighting Soviet partisans or "bandits" (*Bandenbekämpfung*), in this case in the Białowieża (*Bialowies* in German) forest in the north-east of German-occupied Poland. Jews fleeing to the forest to escape the Holocaust were caught in the middle and became victims largely of the *Luftwaffe's* hunter killers, ordinary ground soldiers of the Nazi air force. Whether in the forest killing partisans, local villagers, or Jews, the *Luftwaffe* infantrymen engaged in a war of extermination.

According to Philip Blood, Hermann Göring, the *Luftwaffe* supreme commander and in 1939 designated Adolf Hitler's successor, shaped the air force "out of forestry, hunting, and aviation, which combined the elements that were most Germanic in spirit to raise a frontier police with the capability to strike at enemies from a long distance" (62). Göring's wartime interest in the Białowieża forest resulted in no small part from his passion for hunting. Not far away, in East Prussia, Göring – named in 1934 Reich Master of the German Forests and German Hunt – had turned Rominten, the Kaiser's former hunting estate, into one of his own private domains.