

Mass Violence in Nazi-Occupied Europe. Ed. Alex J. Kay and David Stahel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018. 307 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$40.00, paper.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2021.35

The violence perpetrated by the Nazis remains astonishing—in the range of its victims, the degree of its cruelty, and the span of its geography. In the introduction to this volume, editors Alex J. Kay and David Stahel argue that an integrated history of Nazi mass violence remains unwritten. In their view, historians have carried out research on its most salient aspect, the Holocaust, in isolation from other forms of mass violence: “A comprehensive integrative history of Nazi mass killing, addressing not only the Holocaust but also the murder of psychiatric patients, the elimination of the Polish intelligentsia, the starvation of captured Red Army soldiers and the Soviet urban population, the genocide of the Roma, and the brutal antipartisan operations, however, is yet to be written.” They go on to note that “this volume is not designed to fill that gap, but rather to provide an impetus to future research” (1).

Despite Kay and Stahel’s argument that the study of mass violence in Nazi-occupied Europe has taken place in silos, historians of the Holocaust and/or of the Nazi era will be very familiar with many of the topics covered in the volume’s twelve essays. Johannes Hürter, for example, further explores the complicity of Wehrmacht generals in carrying out the Holocaust. Wolfgang Wipperman offers a searing indictment of German historians for neglecting the genocide of the Sinti and Roma, and of European governments for refusing to acknowledge this genocide. Another essay, by Ulrike Winkler and Gerrit Hohendorf, provides new information about the Wehrmacht’s role in the murder of psychiatric patients in a specific locale, Mogilev. Yet historians of the Holocaust have long pointed to the connections between the T 4 program, the murder of physically disabled patients in Germany in 1939–40, and the gassings of Jews shortly thereafter.

In their essay, Kay and Stahel provide an excellent overview of the literature on the ten million ordinary soldiers who were deployed on the Eastern Front between 1941 and 1944. Among other actions, Wehrmacht soldiers commandeered food and livestock—thus starving local populations—and kidnapped adults for forced labor. Kay and Stahel argue that “the sheer brutality of the German conduct of war and occupation in the Soviet Union has overshadowed many activities that would otherwise be (rightly) held up as criminal acts (174).” Overshadowed? While ordinary Wehrmacht soldiers were never brought to trial for such crimes, much recent work has emphasized ordinary soldiers’ war crimes. Kay and Stahel’s conclusion, while correct, is hardly novel: “the war of annihilation in the East was not just Hitler’s war or that of the Wehrmacht High Command, but also of the ordinary German and Austrian soldiers (189).”

Despite the well-known findings of many of these essays, the volume nonetheless uncovers some surprising (and dismaying) dimensions to Nazi violence. Martin Dean, for example, discerns that local work demands led to somewhat better conditions for Jews who found themselves in concentration camps run by the Organization Todt or the Wehrmacht. While the end result was the same—there were very few survivors—these differing conditions complicate the notion that “destruction through work” (55) was the overriding aim for all those deploying Jewish labor in Nazi-occupied Europe. In another essay, Reinhard Otto and Rolf Keller outline what little is known about

Slavic Review 80, no. 1 (Spring 2021)

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the roughly 100,000 Soviet prisoners-of-war who were transferred from POW to concentration camps. Mauthausen appears to be the hub of this story, but Soviet POWs were exploited for their labor, and often later murdered, in numerous concentration camps. In his essay, Waitman Wade Beorn brings together many strands of recent research on sexual violence in Nazi-occupied Europe. Despite the paucity of evidence (not least because perpetrators often murdered their victims), sexual violence was much more prevalent than generally acknowledged in the histories of the Holocaust and Nazi-occupied Europe. Beorn explores this topic from the perspective of physical space, focusing first on the eastern territories generally, and then on the specific situations in ghettos and camps. He also notes the presence of same-sex sexual violence, although even less source material is available on this topic.

The last three essays in the volume focus on memory debates. As the editors usefully note in their introduction, the concept “mass violence” is “independent of legal or political implications,” unlike “genocide,” “ethnic cleansing,” or “mass crimes” (1). In recent decades, the latter words have become extraordinarily politicized. In a fascinating essay on the politics of state-building in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, Dovid Katz shows how the term “Double Genocide”—referencing both Nazi and Soviet crimes—is now *de rigueur* in the Baltic republics. Any attempt to parse the differences between Nazi and Soviet crimes is deemed criminal activity. This, in turn, shuts down study of the Holocaust in favor of aggrandizing “national heroes” who fought the Soviet Union (and murdered Jews as the persona who had imposed Soviet occupation in 1939–41). Similarly, but for other reasons, Holocaust studies are little developed in Russia. Until recently, as Il’ya Al’tman explains, Russians saw little reason to highlight the Jewish experience as in any way unique; after all, Jewish deaths made up a small number of the overall 27 million Soviet deaths.

Kay and Stahel may well be correct that there is no single, integrated history between two book covers that addresses all aspects of Nazi mass violence. Decades of work, though, on Nazi ambitions in the east belie their argument that historians have not looked at the Holocaust in concert with other aspects of Nazi violence. It is notable that none of the authors in *Mass Violence in Nazi-Occupied Europe* focus on the 1942 “Generalplan Ost” or any of the other megalomaniacal plans imagined by Nazi bureaucrats in the heady days of Operation Barbarossa. This is a striking omission, not least because these plans actually link all the disparate aspects of mass violence in Nazi-occupied Europe. An integrative framework for mass violence in Nazi-occupied Europe must consider the Nazis’ overarching project: a vast German empire, stretching across the Soviet Union, peopled by sturdy German peasants, and free of all “lesser” peoples.

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The Whole World Was Watching: Sport in the Cold War. Ed. Robert Edelman and Christopher Young. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020. xiv, 334 pp. Notes. Index. \$65.00, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2021.36

Robert Edelman and Christopher Young provide a welcome addition to a growing body of literature on sport and the cultural Cold War. Born out of a series of conferences which assembled sports scholars from across the globe, the volume’s key strengths are its diversity of authors and its global focus. The main players, the US and USSR, are of course represented, but the essays move beyond the outdated binaries of the