

## Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust

**By Ari Joskowitz. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2023. Pp. 368. Hardcover \$32.00. ISBN: 978-0691244044.**

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Ari Joskowitz has produced a masterful work examining the unequal relationship between Jews and Roma, and its profound consequences for our understanding of the Holocaust and its aftermath. This unequal relationship, Joskowitz suggests, is captured in Jews saying “they suffered like us,” while Roma say “we suffered like Jews” (3); Jewish experiences have become the norm by which the experiences of other victim groups are judged. There is far greater commemoration today of the Jewish than the Romani Holocaust (a term Joskowitz prefers to alternative names for the mass murder of Roma during the Second World War, as it underlines the parallel relationship between the suffering of Jews and Roma); trials and research organisations have produced far more extensive collections of evidence addressing the experiences of Jewish than Romani victims. Readers seeking a general history of the Jewish and Romani Holocausts will be disappointed, with only a single chapter on the Nazi period (and this predominantly about how Jews and Roma perceived each other during the Holocaust). Rather, the book is about the production of knowledge of the Holocaust, in light of this unequal relationship. Joskowitz seeks to avoid the sterile approach of comparisons of relative suffering, instead producing a relational history of commonalities and entanglements between the two victim groups, as well as differences, from before the Holocaust to the present day.

Joskowitz identifies three key factors shaping the unequal perception of the Jewish and Romani Holocausts. Firstly, despite similarities in perpetrator stereotypes, there were substantial differences in how the victim groups were imagined: Roma as the bottom of the social hierarchy, Jews as part of a shadowy elite. Secondly, Jews were disproportionately urban, literate, and politically organised, with means of responding to persecution unavailable to Roma, who were disproportionately rural, had lower levels of literacy, and lacked collective organisations. These differences also dominated relationships between Roma and Jews before, during, and after the Holocaust. Finally, anti-Roma measures took the form of a “silent persecution” (6): they were widely accepted on both the political left and right, left comparatively little trace in public discourse, and were largely implemented by local municipalities and police. Consequently, the persecution of the Roma left few traces for historians and courts, compared to the “loud persecution” of Jews, which faced opposition from leftist and Jewish organisations, was hotly debated in the press, and was often driven by the upper levels of state and party, leaving extensive traces.

The first chapter highlights the parallel but largely separate experiences of Roma and Jews during the Holocaust, underpinned by their experiences of “distinct yet intertwined fates, separated by physical barriers and observed from a distance” (23). Intersections and moments of closer interaction could lead to sympathy on the basis of shared suffering and sometimes to cooperation, but also sometimes to competition to survive, often shaped by racial hierarchies established by Nazi perpetrators that arbitrarily put Jews above Roma in some locations, and vice versa in others.

The remaining chapters explore efforts by Jews and Roma to secure recognition of, and compensation for, their suffering, efforts that unfolded in parallel, that had at times very different outcomes, but that often included cooperation. Jewish survivors benefited from extensive Jewish international organisations that could lobby on their behalf, as well as agencies able to assemble extensive documentary material. Roma lacked these

organisational and material resources, while suffering from continuing police surveillance under prewar laws against “asocials.” Consequently, much of the book is a study of the unequal treatment of Jews and Roma – by states and refugee organisations after the war (chapter 2), collectors of survivor testimony (chapter 3), in perpetrator trials (chapter 4), and in the establishment of large-scale, mostly Jewish-run research institutes such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (chapters 5 and 6).

At the same time, the book highlights many instances of Jewish and Romani cooperation. Roma sometimes turned to Jewish organisations for help, and Jewish researchers, social workers, and administrators worked to achieve the parallel recognition of Romani suffering. The Eichmann trial in Israel was the first occasion in which a separate charge for the mass murder of Roma was brought against a perpetrator. Even so, prewar anti-Roma stereotypes shaped many of these interactions, especially in the first two decades after the war. Anti-Roma sentiment often coloured Jewish survivor testimony about the Romani Holocaust, Jewish collectors more often collected testimony *about* than *from* Romani survivors, and institutions such as the USHMM only gradually came to make space for representation of the Romani Holocaust. Consequently, the material available on the Romani Holocaust remains far more limited than that about the Jewish Holocaust, even as Jewish-focused archives remain the main repositories of such material.

The final chapter (chapter 6) notes the growing cooperation of Jewish and Romani commemorative organisations in marking the Jewish and Romani Holocausts through to the present day. It particularly charts the slow shift in the USHMM to making space for the Romani Holocaust, following determined lobbying by Romani organisations, the collecting efforts of individual curators, and the influence of visiting scholars. The chapter also notes the growing cooperation between Jewish and Romani organisations, a cooperation largely undisturbed by concerns over Palestine that have frequently disrupted interactions between Jewish and non-Jewish civil rights movements.

The challenge faced by *Rain of Ash* is how to write an equal history of this unequal relationship between Jews and Roma, given that there are overwhelmingly more Jewish than Romani sources and institutions. In places, the book is primarily a discussion of how Jewish scholars, activists, and institutions have represented Roma, rather than about Romani self-representations. At the same time, Ari Joskowitz always tries to draw out Romani perspectives and, where he cannot do so, to highlight the silences. Overall, this is an exceedingly thoughtful and insightful contribution to Holocaust studies scholarship.

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## **Das Schloss der Schriftsteller. Nürnberg '46. Treffen am Abgrund**

**By Uwe Neumahr. Munich: C. H. Beck. Pp. 304. Cloth €26.00. ISBN: 978-3406791451.**

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The first Nuremberg Trial has been exhaustively documented for both experts and the general reader ever since the final verdict was announced for the twenty-four defendants in October 1946. However, the experience of the press corps has been largely overlooked.