

The following chapters provide an in-depth overview of the state of diplomacy between Germany and the United States, as well as between Germany and Japan, before 1941. It is here that Schmider develops his core arguments in painstaking detail, providing us with what, at times, feels almost like an hour-to-hour reconstruction of the events as they played out. Such details are important, it turns out, because they played a decisive role in shaping Hitler's grand strategy during those fateful December days. There were three factors, above all, that the author highlights as essential for understanding Hitler's decision. First, Nazi Germany's relationship with Japan before the attack on Pearl Harbor was not that of close, reliable allies. At one point during 1941, Schmider points out, the German government even "reached the conclusion that their would-be allies were probably seeking a better deal from the West" (264). It was only in early November 1941 that signs from Japan began to indicate to German observers that their Asian ally might be preparing a war against the Western powers in the Pacific. But even at this point, Hitler and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop's first reaction was "to restrain the Japanese from extending their war of aggression to the USA" (266). This changed a few days later, however, when the United States finally gutted the Neutrality Act on November 13, 1941. Hitler saw this move as clear evidence that a war with America was on the horizon. Add to this the third and most crucial factor, namely that both the dictator and most of his high-level military staff agreed at precisely that time that "the Red Army was, if not quite a broken reed, certainly past the point where Allied help would be able to pull it back from the brink" (426).

What Schmider describes, in other words, is a perfect example of historical contingency. It was the coming together of these three factors at this specific moment in time that made Hitler declare war against the United States. Schmider makes a convincing case based on a careful archival reconstruction and interpretation of the events. That said, in his attempt to rationalize Hitler's strategic decisions of late 1941, the author risks overlooking at times that, in the grand scheme of things, ideology remained the central framework within which Hitler operated. The danger of this approach becomes especially evident at the end of the monograph, when Schmider argues that the "avalanche of disasters" that left in tatters the grand strategy that had guided the German war effort the day Hitler declared war against the U.S. "would have been hard for anyone to foresee" (548-549). That might be true for the nitty-gritty of how the events unfolded on the ground but not for the larger picture. The choice to go to war against both the Soviet Union and the United States within months was, in the end, a megalomaniacal one concocted by an ideological mind.

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Die Ermordung ungarischer Juden 1944 in Pustavám. Zeugenschaft und Erinnerung im transnationalen Kontext

**By Anikó Boros. Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2020. Pp. v + 286.
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This book attempts to fill a gap in Holocaust memory research by addressing questions about the witness testimonies of the Pustavám mass murder event in 1944. Pustavám is a village in Hungary not far from Budapest, where a couple hundred Jewish forced laborers were shot

in a day. The questions remain who shot them, the Hungarians or the German SS, and who can testify to what happened exactly. By questioning how, when, and who provided testimony to whom and when, Anikó Boros calls attention to the multifaceted dynamics that influence witness accounts when they are recorded and questions their usage as evidence when creating narratives of past events. Unlike most scholars of this subject, Boros rejects the aim of determining who was responsible and who were the perpetrators. She argues that such goals, heavily based on witness testimony and filled with emotional undertones, have resulted in flawed research that tends to depict non-Jewish locals as victims and Jewish deaths as acceptable collateral damage of the war. Her aim is not to reconstruct the past but to critically analyze how, why, by whom, and whose witness accounts have been used in the attempt to create a factual and sequential story of the event. To this end, using mixed methodology of source criticism and hermeneutical methods, she scrutinizes the witnesses' testimonies while reminding the reader that witness accounts are not the whole story, even if they are the only story we have. She emphasizes that the narrating and recording of witness accounts does not happen in a void; the witnesses are influenced by political and cultural currents, and their testimonies are directed by the questions of their interviewers. In this regard, witness accounts are dialogues, not monologues, and one needs to take into consideration the prompts of the dialoguing partner.

In the execution of her argument, Boros dissects the multiple phenomena that play a part in the making and recording of witness testimonies, such as: competitive victimhood, distribution of resources, interviewers' influence, willingness of witnesses to testify, duplicate testimonies resulting from the exchange of accounts between witnesses, and lack of testimony from those who remain silent. In order to deduce macrohistorical conclusions from her microhistorical case study, she investigates the dynamics of how witnesses' interaction with their surroundings and community gives birth to their accounts. Boros does so because, in her view, in East-Central Europe "memory" continues to be an active problem even today. The prevalent narratives blame Nazi Germany for killing the Jews and portray non-Jewish locals as victims of the Germans as well. The inconsistent nature of the narratives surrounding the Pustavám mass murder event, the lack of nuance and acknowledgment of complicity, prevent true commemoration or active remembrance of the tragedy. Competing views of the Holocaust create memory grey zones that stand in the way of reconciling with the past and appropriately commemorating it in the present. These "memory" problems, in her view, are an obstacle to reconciliation.

Boros argues her thesis in five chapters of varying lengths. The first chapter lays the groundwork for her methodology and points out the lacunae and mistakes of the scholarship she is attempting to overcome. She provides some examples of how the Pustavám mass murder has been studied but does not reference other similar Hungarian or European cases and how they have been studied. In the second chapter, she introduces the history of Jews and Germans in Hungary during the modern period. The third chapter is the longest and provides a thorough, well-argued analysis of the witness accounts that the author groups by those of Jews, non-Jewish villagers, and military personnel. She subdivides these groups based on who, where, when, and by whom the witnesses were interviewed. In the short fourth chapter, she analyzes secondary sources, including media, literary, museum, and material cultural accounts (tombstones) of the event. Her fifth chapter states her conclusions and emphasizes that Boros is not interested in reconstructing the "facts," but prefers to call attention to the dialectics, perspectives, and interpretations that take place when scholars create perceptions of past narratives based on witness accounts.

The book's strength lies in the execution of Boros' argument and her well-introduced methodology, terminology, and critical perspective. Nevertheless, the work would benefit from a broader discussion of memory studies in order to underscore the book's value and significance. A comparative perspective to the author's case study would help the reader to fully appreciate the macrohistorical propositions of her approach to witness testimonies. This is especially relevant because the subject of Holocaust memory is of interest to a wide

array of readers and has major political connotations even today. The flaws of methods that use witness testimonies to tell the past have major implications not just for Holocaust studies but for all crimes. Therefore, it would be useful to compare the methods and results of Boros' case study to other similar case studies in the region in order to see the macrohistorical significance that she indicates her research aids. In this way, one could better observe how the concerns Boros raises about the use of witness testimonies are applicable to or differ from other cases.

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All the Horrors of War: A Jewish Girl, a British Doctor, and the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen

By Bernice Lerner. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020. Pp. 280. Cloth \$27.00. ISBN 978-1421437705.

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In the months following the end of the Second World War, in a gymnasium in Lüneburg, Germany, the Belsen trial took place. Charged were forty-five members of the *Schutzstaffel* and Kapos from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. On September 18, 1945, Colonel T.M. Backhouse, Counsel for the Prosecution, asked witness Brigadier Glyn Hughes, Deputy Director of Medical Services of the British Second Army if he had ever seen anything like Bergen-Belsen. "I have been a doctor for thirty years and have seen all the horrors of war," Hughes replied, "but I have never seen anything to touch it" (9). He was the first witness called for the prosecution.

Meanwhile, nearly a thousand kilometres away, one of the survivors of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, fifteen-year-old Rachel Genuth, was recovering at a converted school in Katrineholm, Sweden. After the war, Sweden accepted thousands of Holocaust survivors to help them recuperate. Genuth and her older sister Elisabeth struggled to put their lives back together in a country where they knew not the language, the people, or the culture.

Bernice Lerner weaves together the story of these two individuals: liberator, Glyn Hughes, and Holocaust survivor, Rachel Genuth, the author's mother. While Lerner's two subjects never met, both ended up at Bergen-Belsen during the spring of 1945, albeit for drastically different reasons. The author traces their stories primarily from spring 1944, Genuth in her native Transylvania, and Hughes in England preparing to follow Allied troops across Europe after the Normandy invasion. A condensed, dual biography, *All the Horrors of War* explores aspects of both the Holocaust and the Second World War.

In 1944, Genuth and her family were taken from their home in Sighet by Hungarian gendarmes, brought to a train station, placed in cattle wagons, and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Most of Sighet's Jewish population was killed; Genuth and her sister survived, while the rest of their family was murdered. During the summer of 1944, the sisters were transferred from Auschwitz to Christianstadt, a labor camp attached to a German munitions factory in Upper Silesia. By March 1945, the two were sent to Bergen-Belsen. Prior to their liberation, Genuth contracted tuberculosis and her sister was nearing death.

The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, the focal point of Lerner's book, was located on the Lüneburg Heath in Northwest Germany. Originally built to house labourers, in 1940 the