

getting lost in his love of details, Henschke gambles away every chance of a more in-depth analysis.

Henschke's goal, at which he duly arrives, is to assess Rosenberg's people as "good" citizens once they renounce National Socialism and pursue a career in German institutions, and "bad" citizens if they do not renounce Nazi jargon or old networks. It is fatal when the desire to make moral judgments about an entire generation renders the subtleties of individual biographies irrelevant. It is even worse when a study attempting to write the story of Rosenberg's elite falls apart into details and anecdotes without working on a unifying question. All these functionaries around and with Rosenberg were antisemites, believed in the superiority of the White race, and supported Hitler, even though they came from different backgrounds. Irritatingly, Henschke does not pay attention to the elites who were driven out of Germany or killed by Rosenberg's propaganda and actions abroad.

A chapter about Rosenberg's enemies outside the NSDAP, in the milieu of exiles and emigrants, is absent. The milieus from which Rosenberg's elite emerged are not that different. None of the Rosenbergs came from a liberal background or even from the labor movement; they all belonged to nationalist or antisemitic associations of the Weimar Republic. In the end, Henschke seems to imply that many Nazi perpetrators broke away from Rosenberg's ideology after the war, while others did not, which is a somewhat banal finding. The value of this study is not immediately apparent: rather, one has to tease out the conclusion from a large number of individual biographies. Apparently, Adenauer's Germany was not able to find employees and civil servants coming from the labor movement or the Liberal Democrats. But what does that mean for the further history of the Federal Republic of Germany, in which the academic elite traditionally had the say as state officials?

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## **Builders of the Third Reich: The Organisation Todt and Nazi Forced Labour**

**By Charles Dick. London: Bloomsbury, 2021. Pp. ix + 265. £85 (HB). ISBN 978-1350182660.**

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For many years, the Organisation Todt (OT), the giant engineering organization which literally paved the German occupation of Europe, was relegated to the background of historical interest. Overshadowed by other Nazi agencies, the OT was deemed too technical to merit more piercing analysis than the occasional, sweeping remark in military histories. That view was systematically perpetuated by those writers who had a vested interest in keeping the organization at arm's length from Nazi-era crimes, including its second head Albert Speer and his deputy-*cum*-antagonist Franz Xaver Dorsch, but also right-wing historians such as Franz Seidler, who were able to dominate discussions of the subject thanks to its obscurity.

However, over the past twenty-five years, the picture has changed significantly. With the twin boom of the history of forced labor and business history, the OT could no longer remain "below the radar" (8). Several authors, among them Edith Raim and Marc Buggeln, uncovered the OT's role in the exploitation of forced labor in general and concentration camp

labor in particular. A veritable wave of Speer biographies—though there are unfortunately still none of academic quality about Fritz Todt—helped shed light on the OT's structure and internal conflicts. And finally, several recent publications have broken new ground by studying the organization's role in occupied Europe, notably Fabian Lemmes's massive study of France and Italy but also Simon Gogl's and Ketil Gjølme Andersen's respective books on Norway.

These geographical choices are not accidental but reflect the need to tackle the OT from where the sources are. With the OT headquarters' papers all but destroyed, the material created and left behind in occupied Europe offers the primary path to approach the subject. Therefore, another new publication, Charles Dick's *Builders of the Third Reich* (a title that bears an unfortunate resemblance to Seidler's *Baumeister des Dritten Reiches*), also devotes much attention to Norway and France while making some commendable excursions to East Europe. Dick's goal is to "present a more balanced and complete picture of how [the OT] operated and flourished within the Third Reich" (9). In pursuing that agenda, he identifies five themes: the organization's contribution to the Nazi regime's imperial project; its participation in plunder; the OT's close cooperation and competition with the Wehrmacht, the SS, and industry; the systematic violence in OT labor camps; and the thorny question of motivations, notably what drove the OT's engineering personnel to participate in a project of territorial expansion and racist oppression that was criminal from start to finish.

In an attempt at an analytical rather than a chronological structure, these five themes translate into the book's chapters. Yet the impression is at least partly misleading as each chapter deals with matters of forced labor. The result is, unfortunately, less systematic than expected due to two principal shortcomings: first, rather than addressing a clearly defined research question, Dick's study moves uneasily between a comprehensive organizational history of the OT as echoed in the five themes and a more focused study of forced labor, as the book's title would indicate. While the former, wider ambition remains out of reach within the scope of the present volume, the latter focus gets watered down. This also reflects, second, a structural problem that marks the entire book: although it tries to be methodical, much of its evidence, including that on forced labor, is anecdotal. While that is not a problem in terms of the plausibility of Dick's key conclusion—the OT's both extensive and intense implication in involuntary labor recruitment, deportation, mistreatment, and murder on a vast scale—it comes at the price of an inconsistent narrative which jumps between times and places and is unable to provide systematic data. While the book is littered with numbers on recruitment, workforces, and mortality rates, these numbers do not add up to a comprehensive quantitative overview of any of the many places between the Ørlandet camp in Norway and the Yugoslav copper mine in Bor. The result is impressionistic, and the absence of a single table in the entire volume illustrates the problem.

This is not to say that Dick's findings are uninteresting. His account offers various highly revealing insights into the OT's internal organization and the strong identification of its top echelons with the Nazi regime's wider goals of aggression, domination, and destruction. A number of case studies which take the reader to the Kaufering *Außenlager*, the Vaivara camp in Estonia, to Alderney Island, and to Radashkovichy in Belarus provide harrowing details about mistreatment and outright murder at the hand of OT members, who put their workers through grueling working and living conditions, cordoned off dedicated execution sites, and murdered individual Jewish victims because they felt free to. Drawing on interviews with former OT forced laborers, the book's most rewarding parts not only illustrate the scale of suffering but show how contingent survival was on situational circumstances such as job assignments, skills, and qualifications, or the whims of guards. If not surprising, given what we already know about Nazi forced labor, Dick's account is one more nail in the coffin of the idea that there were any innocent spaces in a war of aggression and extermination.

Hence also Dick's conclusion that the "OT was an integral part of the Nazi terror machine during the Second World War" (195), even if his interpretation of motivations hovers a little uncertainly between Stefan Kühl's concept of "ordinary organizations" and the "ordinary men" famously portrayed by Christopher Browning. That "members of the OT fitted the category of 'ordinary men' . . . more aptly than any other group so far investigated by historians" (196), however, seems rather doubtful, not least with an eye to the 17 million men serving in the Wehrmacht. In fact, the semi-mythical figure of the German engineer, to whose popularization the OT and its leaders contributed, would seem to point in a different direction, one in which a sense of professionalism and of a higher "common purpose" (179) helped justify limitless brutality. This is only briefly explored, though, not least because of the lack of pertinent sources such as personal papers or recollections.

At the end of the day, the back sleeve claim that Dick's volume is "the first comprehensive critical study of the Organisation Todt" is beating the drum a little too loudly. But it does a fair job of turning the spotlight on an outfit that has long played second fiddle to other Nazi organizations, not least for the benefit of readers who cannot access German, French, or Norwegian research. That in itself is no small feat.

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## **Nazi Camps and Their Neighbouring Communities: History, Memory and Memorialization**

**By Helen J. Whatmore-Thomson. London: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xviii + 320. Cloth \$80. ISBN 978-0-19-8789772-2.**

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For decades after World War II and the Holocaust, historians generally assumed that most Europeans living in the vicinity of concentration camps during the war did not associate with them in any way during the war. Thereafter, they failed to process what the camps were all about, as they put the past behind them, and simply got on with their lives. This book proves that this was simply not the case. It makes an important contribution to the growing scholarship that focuses on how Europeans processed the Holocaust and how they subsequently memorialized the camps in the decades after the war.

The book focuses on three concentration camps: Neuengamme near Hamburg, Natzweiler-Struthof in Alsace, and Vught in the southern Netherlands. It zeroes in on an understudied population: the locals who lived in proximity of these camps. These were individuals who "evolved to live with [them] during the war and afterwards" (2). The book seeks to determine the extent to which members of local communities were involved with the camps along with the modes of behavior they exhibited toward perpetrators and victims. Helen Whatmore-Thomson argues that locals were not "simply innocent collectives of ordinary citizens untouched by the presence of the camps; they were manifestly associated with it and part of the wider system that condoned it" (9).

The book makes the case that the camps could not have engaged in their nefarious war-time operations without the accommodation from local communities, which "provided manpower to help construct camps, adapted local infrastructure, and provided logistical support to the Nazis" (14). Traditional accounts about interactions between locals and camps