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Frank Bajohr, Dieter Pohl, Right-Wing Politics and the Rise of Antisemitism in Europe 1935–1941, Göttingen (Wallstein) 2019, 270 S. (European Holocaust Studies, 1), ISBN 978-3-8353-3347-5, EUR 38,00.

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»Right-Wing Politics and the Rise of Antisemitism in Europe 1935–1941« is the first in a new series of English-language yearbooks, »European Holocaust Studies« (EHS), dedicated to one specific theme each year. EHS is edited by the Centre for Holocaust Studies at the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History in Munich; contributors to the current volume are based in academic institutions right across Europe as well as in Israel.

There is no introduction that would set out the conception of the volume, but its title in fact echoes the second of the eight research articles, »Right-Wing Politics and Antisemitism in Europe, 1935–1940: A Survey« authored by one of the editors, Dieter Pohl. Pohl emphasizes the European character of the Holocaust and »the broad involvement of non-Germans« that was »by and large enacted autonomously, with little or no German pressure or interference« (p. 19). He surveys the now substantial literature on the role of home-grown antisemitism in Eastern Europe, often at the micro-historical level in a variety of national contexts. Pohl points to Arno Mayer as the one who blazed a trail for this now established field in 1988 (p. 20). Crucially, Pohl points to another taboo, still much more effective, which current historical research slowly but steadily gnaws away at: antisemitism was not simply a prerogative of fascists in the period, but there was a much more generally shared »transnational trend towards a new anti-Jewish discourse« (p. 21).

An entire research agenda with room for cohorts of PhDs emerges from this question: how did this trend in the 1930s differ from the gestation period of modern, trans-European antisemitism in the last third of the 19th century and the waves of antisemitic violence after the First World War? How were these national-but-transnational traditions transformed by German hegemony and occupation? What was the reach of antisemitism in different countries? Are national, regional, milieu or political contexts most important? How was antisemitism related to the existence, role and importance of an actual Jewish minority? How were Nazi antisemitism and other fascist or non-fascist antisemitisms related or even interconnected at any point in time and how did they differ (p. 21–22)?

One might want to add more questions: what was the role of gender in different national contexts? How did antisemitism play out in societies differentially structured by class relations? If antisemitism as an ideology was a language in which to talk about society by using »the Jew« as a signifier for the wrong kind

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of modernity, how did this intersect with the ideologies of existing, perhaps competing social movements?

Nazi »experts« keenly reported on and exaggerated antisemitic movements all over the world, and more or less secretly funded many. Nevertheless, fascist and antisemitic internationalism was difficult to achieve, not least because many antisemites were also anti-German. Although the Nazis' anti-communism and Wirtschaftswunder were widely admired, racists of different stripes begged to differ on how exactly to construe the concept of race; the supposedly »biological« concept favoured by most Nazis was not an easy export. Pohl's literature survey suggests that there was an almost universal shift towards more radical antisemitism from 1935 onwards (p. 25), during a period, though, when Nazi Germany very publicly was on its best behaviour, like in the context of the 1936 Olympics.

A »common pattern« in East-Central and South-Eastern Europe evolved in the period: »authoritarian governments with antisemitic tendencies fought against highly antisemitic fascist movements« (p. 25–26), a contest whose dynamics led to ever-increasing antisemitism. It is impossible not to be reminded of the similar dynamics between increasingly authoritarian »conservatives« and increasingly right-wing »populists« in the present period: the contemporary relevance of studying this history arguably lies in the escalating nature of the »fascist drift« (Philippe Burrin) or »creep« (Alexander Reid Ross) more than in the details of party programmes and policies.

In Western Europe, by contrast, the dynamic was first of all one of polarization between right and left, most evidently in France and Spain, ending with a defeat of the left and a sharp antisemitic and pro-Nazi turn of far-right and fascist parties from 1936 onward. Key to the analysis is to look at how the transnational manifests itself in the nationally specific: British fascists, for example, were from the beginning more antisemitic than their Italian comrades but failed to make much headway as British nationalism needed to fight off the German challenge to Empire and was therefore relatively immune to more than superficial fondness of Nazism. Likewise, the antisemitic propaganda against »Manchester conditions« (aka greedy capitalism) doesn't wash in Manchester. A growing literature shows that nominally universalistic institutions like the Soviet socialist regime and the Catholic Church were highly ambivalent concerning the equality of Jews (p. 28–30).

Pohl suggests that more than the Jewish global conspiracy purported by the »Protocols of the Elders of Zion«, antisemitism generally was about nation building: »nationalists since around 1900« transnationally agreed that a nation needed a nationalised middle class, and this is where getting rid of the Jews came in. Academia was a key battlefield in this regard (p. 31). The perhaps most striking conclusion of Pohl's survey is that »[a]lmost nowhere did Hitler prefer the fascists as partners during the war«, while »it was the radical conservatives who helped deport and murder the Jews« (p. 38). Local antisemites saw Hitler as confirmation, not inspiration for their own views on »the Jewish question«.

Three related articles in the volume deal directly with the matters surveyed by Pohl. Frank Bajohr discusses »German

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Antisemitism and its Influence in Europe« using »[t]he Example of Alfred Rosenberg and the Nazi Foreign Policy Office after 1933«. The main source of this article are Rosenberg's diaries that were only recently published by Jürgen Matthäus and Bajohr himself. Bajohr writes that Rosenberg, the chief ideologue of the Nazi party, opposed universalist creeds like Bolshevism or Christianity as emanations of »the Jewish spirit« and accordingly understood National Socialism as specifically German, i. e. not to be applied straightforwardly elsewhere and by others. Rosenberg was central to antisemitic internationalism which was pursued, though, deliberately as an internationalism of radical nationalists who often did not see eye to eye.

Ferenc Laczó discusses »The Radicalization of Hungarian Antisemitism until 1941«, zooming in on the same leitmotif, the dialectic of »Indigenous Roots and Transnational Embeddedness«. Grzegorz Krzywiec describes the radicalization of political antisemitism in 1930s Poland entirely in domestic terms, hardly as much as mentioning any Nazi influence: antisemitism is in this context a function of the metamorphoses of radical nationalism.

The second set of four research articles discusses Jewish and non-Jewish reactions to antisemitism in the period. This is first of all a depressing story of the closing of borders, which is in itself a reflection of the general rise of right-wing nationalist politics. Secondly, this is a story of the transnational efforts of Jews and some others, often across political allegiances, to help at least some refugees to cross these borders, and to survive antisemitic violence that was, in the 1930s, not yet readily recognisable as the first stages of »the« Holocaust. The volume closes with a review essay, the discussion of a document concerning the way the World Jewish Congress reacted to developments in 1939, and a series of descriptions of currently ongoing research projects.

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