

Book Reviews

Edited by LOUIS LEVITT, D.S.W.

Essay Review: On the Holocaust

NORA LEVIN

Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust, by Helen Fein. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, paperback ed., 1984. 468 pp. \$13.95.

An Interrupted Life: The Diaries of Etty Hillesum, 1941-1943. Tr. from the Dutch by Arno Pomerans. Pantheon Books, New York, n.d. 226 pp. \$12.95.

Two more disparate books on the Holocaust can scarcely be imagined, yet when read and pondered in juxtaposition they throw in sharp relief the deep abyss that still separates those who were in it from those who try to understand it. Dr. Fein is an outsider, a sociologist, impatient with the more traditional approaches to history, confronting the Holocaust "with the assumption that Jewish victimization was the test case of the response of nations, the end product of a process testing human bonds within nations subject to German instigation or occupation." Her study aims to explain why the survival of Jews in certain lands was greater than the proportion they bore (one-third) of the Jewish population of Europe. In Poland and Holland, for example, almost all Jews perished, but in Italy, Denmark and Bulgaria, most survived. In examining the reasons for these differences, Dr. Fein uses a quantitative approach, involving the construction of models, the testing of hypotheses, and, as she puts it, "sociological modes of knowing," including statistical analysis, cross-tabulation and regression analysis. Buttressing her analyses, correlations, and conclusions are complex appendices. Appen-

dix A defines fifty-eight factors that are coded, such as pre-war status of Jews, strangers, spread (dispersion of Jewish population), national solidarity, success of indigenous anti-Semitic movements and timing of deportation/extermination threat. Appendix B includes methodological notes and intricate tables of zero-order correlation coefficients of revised and critical variables. It is with such tools, aimed at weighting and correlating data, that Dr. Fein analyzes Jewish survival in twenty countries in Europe and in the cities of Athens and Salonica between 1939 and 1945. She alerts the reader to the omission of certain elements in Holocaust history: the organization of the machinery of death, the concentration and extermination camps, the Jewish armed resistance movements, the settlement of refugees who fled and the activities of the Zionist movement in Europe and Palestine. This, therefore, is a circumscribed study, with many dimensions of Holocaust history deliberately selected out, and should not be read as a comprehensive work.

As in all quantitative history, Dr. Fein's study seeks uniformities, repeated patterns, a model and overarching theory. Her major hypotheses are as follows:

1. The greater the solidarity between Jews and non-Jews before the war, the fewer Jewish victims in a particular nation-state;
2. The greater the degree of German control in a state, the less resistance and the more Jewish victims;

3. The more successful the prewar anti-Semitic movements, the more Jewish victims there were.

At the very outset, the effort to establish benchmarks founders. The Soviet Union, in which over a million Jews were murdered, is altogether excluded because population estimates were not "reliable," yet acceptable ones can be found in the monographs of Shimon Redlich and Dov Levin. Moreover, Salonica and Athens are extracted from *their* national unit Greece for reasons that are not clear and dealt with as separate entities together with purely national units. These units are coded to show the extent of Nazi control at the time of deportation or the beginning of physical extermination and therefore include Nazi puppet states such as Croatia, carved out of Yugoslavia, and Slovakia, the eastern part of Czechoslovakia as well as the territorial gains and losses of Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Greece—all involving massive population and cultural-ideological shifts. Yet in establishing solidarity rankings, an arbitrary year—1938—is used and the pre-war nation states, before the territorial changes were made, are indexed. These include the whole of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and pre-war Bulgaria, Hungary and Rumania. This sort of non-symmetry is further confused by ranking France higher than Italy or Bulgaria in inner community "bonding" in 1938—a determination no responsible student of European history would make.

One finds a further inconsistency in the author's use of 1936 as the base year to rank anti-Semitic movements in Hitler-Europe and connect the intensity of these movements with Jewish victimization during the Holocaust. Croatia and Slovakia are listed as "states" in this table, although they were not created until 1941 and 1939 respectively.

Moreover, the Ustashi in Croatia and the Hlinka Guards in Slovakia, which contributed to anti-Jewish feeling and murder later, were not unleashed until their respective puppet states were created.

Further, to rank Poland, Hungary and Rumania with Germany in 1936, as having equally extreme anti-Semitic movements and discriminatory legislation, is pushing definitions and indices to unsound judgments. Despite widespread anti-Semitism, Jews were active in political parties and in economic and cultural life in Poland, Rumania and Hungary in 1936, and Jewish children there could attend schools. The intensification of anti-Semitism and complicity in the murder of Jews in those countries resulted from Nazi controls, or from demands for stepped-up anti-Jewish measures in return for territory or military and political alliance with Germany. In Germany, by 1936, Jews were altogether "outside the universe of sanctified obligation," to use Dr. Fein's language.

Beyond these non-comparable time-and-space units, one also finds the absolute certitudes that quantitative history requires, in order to give it a scientific cast, and a disturbing dogmatism. For example, one is astonished to read that "all Jewish social defense [non-violent] movements required the cooperation of Christians to succeed," but that such movement ought not to be confused with armed resistance. Dr. Fein is referring to the efforts of Jews to evade deportation and to find hiding places. The need to schematize apparently requires the compartmentalization of historical reality, but categories and tables often obfuscate that reality. Most of the armed resistance movements in fact sought hiding places for Jews, and their primitive hectographed newspapers urged Jews not to go or allow themselves to be taken into the deportation

columns. In the Warsaw Ghetto, for example, before the 1943 uprising, there were explicit directives to build bunkers; children were smuggled to the Aryan side or to Hungary; underground girl couriers were sent out continuously to find hiding places. In Paris, the *Eclaireurs Israélites de France* rode subways in the dark of night transporting Eastern European Jews to the countryside, but this activity did not prevent them nor was it at all separate, from their becoming the nucleus of the Jewish fighting organization in France, *Organisation Juive de Combat*. The Bielski-fighters in the White Russian forests killed Nazis and laid ambushes, but also sheltered hundreds of women and children in their family camps. In her analysis of such events, as elsewhere, Dr. Fein is not interested in process or transformation, or the actual blurring of categories, but in a clinical dogma that cannot tolerate qualifying exceptions, mixtures of classifications, or flows of living experience.

One finds a similar absolutism in her statement that "in Poland, unlike Western Europe, it was impossible to deny reports of Jewish extermination after July 1942, on the ground that they could not be verified." Leaving out the mass of literature documenting the Nazi deceptions, including faked postcards from an imaginary work camp called Waldsee; the great variability and scatteredness of "verification"; the breakdown of ordinary communications; the highly individualized and subjective grasp, or inability to grasp, death in a gas chamber; and the sheer unthinkability of such a death in 1942, she uses the certain knowledge of the fate of two Jewish "ghetto dictators", Rumkowski in Lodz and Gens in Vilna, to back up this incredibly raw and inaccurate sentence.

Dr. Fein comes down very hard on those writers who, she alleges, have

been inhibited from examining Jewish behavior in its negative aspects, or who haven't asked the "right questions," and who have accepted "a paradigm of a closed system of perpetrator and victim—the Nazi versus the Jew alone—in which perpetrators are usually cast as acting and the victims as acted upon," an approach which "overlook[s] the interaction among potential murderers, victims, accomplices, and bystanders that preceded the crime of genocide." No serious Holocaust scholar has been guilty of being imprisoned in such a closed system. Rather, the traditional historian can and has dealt with the dense and complex human experiences that defy closed categories. Their work is thickly packed with the immense, unclassifiable details and variability of Jews and non-Jews. Perhaps it is Dr. Fein's own mind-set which is in the grip of a closed system, that comes down very hard on the Jewish Councils, and puts them into her model, but rejects all Zionist and Jewish underground activity. She does not account for the whole range of Nazi deceptions. What she has selected out may be as significant as what she has chosen to select in. As we now understand from scientists themselves, every hypothesis has the underling of a bias, and every "proof" the elaboration of that bias. Dr. Fein has not freed herself of biases. Her study pounds the flesh-and-blood realities of the Holocaust into chunks of data, which yield up a certain limited kind of knowledge, but lack understanding. Curiously, she strays into the realm of the more traditional historian in her Prologue, when she writes of her effort to "pull the threads as best I can," in referring to a Jew writing the history of the Vilna Ghetto on paper on a sewing machine without thread. One wishes she has dealt with threads instead of tables.

The Diaries of Etty Hillesum could find no place in Dr. Fein's tabulations,

because her story is a wholly subjective exploration of one woman's inner life as she grows from self-centered introspection about the course of her complex emotional life, through greater awareness of the suffering of Jews around her, the drawing of the Nazi net around her own private world and her struggle to accept whatever lies ahead. Her diary spans the period from March 1941 to August 1943 and then stops abruptly. The entries were made by an obsessively analytical, searching young Dutch Jewess of twenty-seven during the brutal Nazi occupation of Holland. However, it is her own turbulent soul that interests her mainly, not the harsh events that reach her at first only indirectly.

Etty was the daughter of an assimilated Jewish family, equipped with a law degree, a gift for the Russian language and keen interest in psychology. During the diary years we find her living and being sheltered by devoted Christian friends in a rented room, giving lessons in Russian to earn some money, pondering her relationships with men, including several lovers, reading passionately in Rilke, Dostoyevsky and the Bible, and yearning to become a writer. She experiences wild fluctuations in her feelings, examines "the meaning of life" question continuously, and expresses the turbulent richness of a bright, sensitive young woman maturing at the brink of an abyss. She makes only glancing references to the persecution and suffering of Jews outside her magic circle, and when she is "distracted" by them, she finds her way back, not allowing herself to be "ground down by the misery outside."

The reader may become impatient with so much of Etty's preoccupation with her own self-development while the Nazi killing claw is sharpening outside the cozy warmth of her room and "beloved desk" and tender moments

with her lover Spier, a fifty-five year old psychotherapist and refugee from Germany. Yet gradually and remorselessly, the claw sharpens for her, too, and she steadies herself to retain a strong, inner center that can cope with anything to come. It is this transformation that grips the reader with its intensity of purpose and disciplined certainty, a process of spiritual growth that pulls on the most meaningful elements in Etty's character: her repeated affirmation of the beauty and value of life; her determination not to relieve her feelings through hatred and vengefulness toward Germans; her unconventional religious faith and praying to God, whom she describes as "what is deepest inside me"; her openness to all experiences ("I want to be sent to every one of the camps . . . all over Europe . . . I don't ever want to be safe").

We know that she will not be able to sustain these exalted feelings in Westerbork and Auschwitz, but we must strain to understand the flooding embrace of her fate. Nor was Etty alone in this or similar spiritual pilgrimages of other Jews before the gates of hell opened for them, consuming the brave pledges they made to themselves. One thinks for example, of the quiet, restrained letters of German Jews "going on a journey"—that is, being deported—but not knowing what kind of journey they were going on. Dr. Cora Berliner, who was deported in June 1942, wrote about "the many preparations to be made . . . There have been times lately when I felt that I kept too much outside reality. Now there will be new impressions and new possibilities to prove one's mettle." One also thinks of the last flicker of spiritual pride in the remnants of Zionist training camps in Germany in 1943. On the eve of Passover, the last group is at Grosse/Hamburg on the outskirts of Berlin, to be deported to Auschwitz: ". . . in the evening we sing *Shir*

Ha-ma'alot [Psalms, A Song of Ascent]. A strange atmosphere reigns in this house. A mixture of despair and sharp-witted mockery, of a last glow of will-to-live and drain once more all that life has for giving. A kind of Magic Mountain. And we stand here now, amongst all this, with strength and assurance, perhaps a bit too demonstrative, and preparedness . . . On Monday, at reveille, one last muster. Last words of belief in benevolent fate, of belief in one's companion . . ." Dr. Janusz Korczak and the children of his orphanage, Jewish teachers, rabbis, and countless orthodox Jews also faced their fate with a calm nobility. How does one quantify such experiences? Victimization during the Holocaust had infinite shades and lights, inseparable from the complexity and mystery of each individual life, incapable of being coded and cross-tabulated even in the fifty-eight factors of Dr. Fein's study.

We don't know, of course, how long the struggle "to bear whatever comes" could be sustained by Jewish victims. Etty's broke down at Westerbork, a camp in Holland, deceptively promoted as a labor camp, to which she volunteered to go, which ultimately became a way-station to Auschwitz. She had steeled herself not to hate, "to take it all in", not to become a "chronicler of horrors," but in her last letters to her friends in the summer of 1943, she admits that the misery at Westerbork is indescribable. Her inner core of strength cracks and her God is attacked: "God Almighty, what are you doing to us? . . . We are being hunted to death right through Europe . . . Now I am transfixed with horror . . . Could one ever hope to convey to the outside world what has happened here today? . . ."

Etty perished in Auschwitz on November 30, 1943. Had she survived, her life would have been infinitely more than a statistic in tables, codes, and

cross-references to substantiate a hypothesis. Even so, however brief her life was, it is and was the *life, her life*, that matters, that help us overcome the abyss.

Ms. Levin is Associate Professor of Jewish History and Director of the Holocaust Oral History Archive, Gratz College, Philadelphia

We Can Speak for Ourselves, by Paul Williams & Bonnie Shultz. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 1984. 245 pp.

The emerging self advocacy movement is a development that we have observed for over two decades. Special populations often neglected and invisible to our daily eye are demanding to be seen and to be heard. Beginning with the "Black is Beautiful" formulation of the 60's we have witnessed a growing number of so-called second class citizens who are learning by doing and thereby marching their way into mainstream society.

This book is a remarkable "how to" book. We get a full menu of old fashioned recipes, tried and true and not unlike what mama used to cook. Group work is "alive and well" within a high functioning group of developmentally disabled adults. This group, whom we have seen as vulnerable or in need of our special protection, is able to place before us a model of self organization for the purposes of advancing their own rights and legitimate needs. The book reminds us of many old lessons—everyone likes her/his own independence and wants to do for her/himself. Despite our sense that we have a special expertise and we indeed know how to be helpful without taking over,

this small volume describes the efforts of two self advocacy programs in Great Britain and in Nebraska which illustrate a high degree of self determination and self direction by the mentally retarded members themselves.

The role of the advisor in these groups was an indirect one and clearly the activity and participation of the group members were the key.

Achieving such a high degree of self advocacy in what we would think of as a "limited" group is not miraculous or mysterious. The step by step chapters describing how to organize and to implement read like a primer in group work. The fundamental achievement in this book is the recognition that mentally retarded people can think, plan, and do for themselves and can do this in groups that have the same group development stages as so called normal groups. With group goals clearly stated and shared the mentally retarded have found their voice and are making their way into areas and activities that heretofore have been planned for them, done for them, and decided for them. They are launching themselves, thinking their own thoughts, feeling their own feelings, and doing their own organizing!!

Ethelle Shatz
Assistant Director of Human
Services
Federation of Jewish
Philanthropies
of New York

Daughters of the Covenant, by Edward Wagenknecht. The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1983. 192 pp.

In *Daughters of the Covenant*, Edward Wagenknecht applies his considerable academic research and analytic skills, as a historian of literature, to writing

about "six highly accomplished Jewish women": Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869), Emma Lazarus (1849-1887), Amy Levy (1861-1889), Lillian Wald (1867-1940), Emma Goldman (1869-1940), and Henrietta Szold (1860-1945).

Why this particular half dozen? In the preface the author tells us that: "biographical writers are in large part chosen by their subjects, but I can say they interested me as individuals. They do, nevertheless, illustrate various types of Jewish womanhood."

While it is quite obvious why these six women would interest this author or any student of history and literature as individuals, it is never made clear how they illustrate various types of "Jewish womanhood." One in fact feels at the end quite misled by the title, *Daughters of the Covenant*.

Wagenknecht provides us with a chapter on each woman. He focuses on their sensitivity to esthetics, fine arts and literature; their attitudes toward nature, the political and social climate of their times; their amorous and platonic relationships; and then speaks in a limited way about their Jewishness. Wagenknecht is uneven in his treatment of this last factor.

Of Rebecca Gratz he writes that he has "no doubt that Rebecca fulfilled all the requirements of orthodox Jewry faithfully and uncomplainingly." He then goes on to say: "Many of her utterances on religious matters seem indistinguishable from those of orthodox Christians in her time. . . . Certainly she was no intellectual in matters of religion; indeed there are times when she seems naive."

As for Lillian Wald, he summarizes her relationship to Judaism in the last paragraph of the chapter on her as follows: "When Jane Addams died, a Greek neighbor, visiting Hull House, asked, 'She Catholic? She Orthodox? She Jewish?' and receiving a negative

reply to all these questions, suddenly reached out to grasp realization with 'Oh, I see! She all religions.' The same might well have been said of Lillian Wald.

As a tool for enlightenment for use by Jewish educators and communal professionals about various types of Jewish womanhood, the book is a disappointment. It offers little new information about these individuals either as Jews or as women.

The author's need for scholarly accuracy leaves us in most instances with a very unsatisfying portrait of the woman. We never really understand their motivations, their personalities as a whole, the factors that contributed to making them the "outstanding" individuals they were.

However, as an introduction to the literary works of Amy Levy, the British poet, and Emma Lazarus, who is known to most only as the author of the words at the base of the Statue of Liberty, the text is a delightful eyeopener.

It is in the presentation of the works themselves of these two poets and their analyses that Wagenknecht seems to be most comfortable, and therefore most perceptive. If one approaches this text as a student of literature, there is much to be learned here.

Ellen Deutsch Quint
Consultant, Personnel Services
Council of Jewish Federations
New York

Helping the Abuser: Intervening Effectively in Family Violence, by Barbara Star. Family Service Association of America, New York, 1983. 242 pp. \$19.95.

Star's focus is the abuser—who he is, what causes him to be what he is and what we can do to help him. Finally, she

analyzes in depth six non-traditional program models whose focus is the treatment of the abuser.

This is a very well organized, highly readable book which admirably meets the author's purpose to "suggest ideas about programs that agencies, groups or individuals interested in family violence can implement in their communities." Both lay and professionals will find information from which they can develop innovative programs. Furthermore, during the course of her study, Star identifies a problem prevalent among program directors she interviewed, their feeling of isolation and absence of knowledge about other abuser programs. To reduce their isolation and increase their knowledge, the author developed a booklet, "Services for Abusers in Family Violence Situations." Thus, those interested in developing programs for the abuser have this fine book and a potential network of experienced lay and professionals.

This book is the outgrowth of a study started in 1979 which included 116 agencies. The criteria for inclusion in the study were: 1) an identifiable program or service specifically for family violence abusers, and 2) a program that had been in operation for at least six months. Program providers reflected the full spectrum of social service institutions.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is a general overview of her findings, and the second part an analysis of six non-traditional program models with case examples.

Star has taken one of society's most highly charged and emotional issues and problems and reduced these issues and problems into a reasonable and workable format. She first asked the study participants to formulate what they perceive are the causes of family violence. From these perceptions she tells us what program models and

treatment modalities have been used and were effective. She then identifies issues in program development that administrators must be sensitive to, these involve staffing, funding, community attitudes, and most importantly, staff burnout. Policy makers would do well to review her findings in Chapter 3. By means of a concise chart she gives us a demographic profile of the abuser and then follows this up with a revealing personality profile of the abuser.

Having described the attitude and perceptions of the abuser and some hard facts about the abuser, Star focuses on treatment methods and issues—those that work and those that do not. The direct practitioner and supervisor should find this chapter particularly significant.

Part two is divided into six chapters which describe the six non-traditional programs treating family violence which she researched. These programs vary from being community based consortiums to a closed State hospital setting. Treatment in these programs lasted from short term (12 sessions) to four years. Modalities used covered the spectrum from family therapy to support groups; most used a combination of modalities.

In introducing this second part of the book, the author tells us that she will "lead the reader through the following progression: a) The needs, philosophy and struggles that lead to the creation of the program; b) the components of the program . . . personnel . . . training need; c) . . . typical case . . . intake to termination; d) resolution of recurrent treatment issues; e) the ongoing administrative issues essential to program operation); and f) the key elements needed to ensure the success of the program." She closely follows this outline and the reader is taken through these six topics in language that is studied, disciplined and descriptive. The reader is

struck in all six case examples by the ravages of family violence on all members of the family, not just the abuser and the victim.

Star's excellent knowledge of her subject, combined with her lucid writing style, makes reading this book an informative and educational experience for both professional and lay people interested in addressing this issue.

It is encouraging finally to see a body of knowledge being developed that is abuser-focused since it is only by directly intervening with the assaulter that we will be able to reduce family violence.

Eileen Nagel Rafield
Associate Executive Director
Jewish Child Care
Association of New York

Designing Field Education; Philosophy, Structure and Process, by Nina Hamilton and John F. Else. Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1983. 132 pp.

Designing Field Education has an identity problem. Although it is a brief work it has trouble deciding whether it seeks to be a manual for how to develop learning contracts, a treatise on the philosophy and structure of field education or a mechanism for walking the student through field education. The book itself is designed for both students and faculty and the difficulty in this simultaneous targeting of two very different audiences shows throughout. However, if one can extract the essence from the book, really a monograph on learning contracts, it turns out that there is much of great value to the student, the faculty member and the practitioner in Jewish communal service as well. There is a thorough, yet simple explanation of what learning contracts

are, why one might want to use them, and how to go about developing them. One must be willing to overlook some rhetoric which appears to be left over from the 60's, which discusses sharing between teacher and student in a way which almost negates the idea that the teacher has anything to transmit. But if that failing can be overlooked and if one can ignore the problems in organization caused by the book's attempt to do more than it really is doing well, the experience will be rewarding.

Supervisors in all human service settings, not only teachers and students, can benefit from the use of learning contracts in order to clarify goals and objectives. The material in this book is extremely pointed and succinct in explaining the benefits and how one may go about taking advantage of those benefits. For that reason, this somewhat unusual and odd book is well worth the investment of time in digesting it.

Donald Feldstein, D.S.W.
Assistant Executive Director
Council of Jewish Federations
New York

Dori: The Life and Times of Theodor Herzl in Budapest, by Andrew Handler. The University of Alabama Press, University, Alabama, 1983. 161 pp. \$16.95.

From time to time, writers of the calibre of Andrew Handler appear on the Jewish scene, providing the reader with a scholarly analysis of their subject and a wonderful survey of a period in history. Such is the case of Handler's research and approach to the 18-year period of Theodor Herzl's early years in Budapest.

The archival research and the significant time devoted to the translation of primary sources have exposed the reader to the world of Theodor Herzl and the variety of family, literary, and ideological forces that seem to come together, touching the life of Herzl and influencing his world views. Andrew Handler is a craftsman at defining those delicate and detailed factors that shaped the thinking and actions surrounding Herzl's struggles with his Hungarian roots and his Jewish identity.

This book's contributions, while many, are centered on the revelations exposing the one phase of Herzl's life that remained untapped. For Jewish communal workers, this book provides a number of important insights. First, it reminds us of the complex genealogies and social influences that have been a factor in the shaping of Jewish leadership and in defining a Jewish identity. Second, it is this type of volume that exposes individuals in our discipline to the ingredients, both positive and negative, that form potential leadership. Third, for those of us who have invested much within our careers associated with Zionism and Isreal, the substance of Herzl's early beginnings is a useful and welcomed addition to our understanding of the father of modern Zionism. It is fitting that a native Hungarian, as is Handler, be assigned the responsibility to research this segment of Jewish history. For those who venture upon this book, they will be afforded that wonderful experience of walking through the moments of ecstasy and times of agony that accompanied the Herzl legacy in Budapest.

Dr. Steven Windmueller
Executive Director
Greater Albany Jewish
Federation
Albany, New York