

Or, le fait que Hitler s'était évertué à entrer à l'école de l'Académie à Vienne démontre qu'il visait une formation traditionnaliste. Son échec à l'examen d'entrée ne signale donc pas la frustration d'un projet de devenir peintre d'avant-garde, comme le terme "failure" le suggère. Malgré cela, Grosshans fait de l'atavisme stylistique du futur dictateur la pierre angulaire de son argument. Certaines de ses aquarelles, selon lui, "are true examples of inferior 'postcard' art — dated, stiff, and with little to commend them" (p. 45). Et, plus loin, "there is no life in the work and these buildings, parks, and monuments are stale and stilted" — surtout, comparés à certains motifs urbains des expressionnistes Schmidt-Rottluff, Kirchner et Nolde, pleins de bruit et de boucanne, partant pleins de vie. Hitler, apprend-t-on, gagnait sa vie à Munich à la veille de la Première Guerre par la vente de ces oeuvres. Si ces aquarelles, contrairement à l'art moderniste, "required no deciphering" (encore, comme une carte postale), faut-il y trouver autre chose qu'un indice du goût de sa clientèle? Antérieurement à sa période expressionniste, Emil Nolde devait son indépendance financière justement à la réalisation de cartes postales.

En somme, nous ne pouvons en bonne conscience recommander l'achat de ce livre qui ne renseigne finalement que sur les perceptions étroites et peu fondées de son auteur. Sans doute, y trouvera-t-on un jour une valeur de renseignement sur la façon dont les Occidentaux des années 1980 percevaient la culture du national-socialisme.

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FRANCES HENRY — *Victims and Neighbors: Small Town in Nazi Germany Remembered*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1984. Pp. x, 201.

"Sonderburg" (a pseudonym) is a town in the Rhineland not far from Frankfurt am Main. Its population when Hitler came to power was around 4,000, of whom 150 were Jewish including the paternal grandparents of Frances Henry. The author, who as a child left Germany with her parents in 1939 and who presently teaches anthropology at York University, decided a few years ago to return to the place where she had spent her first carefree holidays. Besides curiosity about her own roots, her purpose was to examine the relationships between Jews and Gentiles in that one small town in order to "shed some light on why the persecution of the Jews took place" (p. ix). Her book thus combines personal recollections of her family's experiences under Nazism with a scholarly investigation of ethnic group interaction in "Sonderburg" both before and after 1933. It is based principally upon some fifty interviews with elderly Germans still living there and surviving Jews residing in the U.S. The accounts of their reactions then and now to the situation of their erstwhile neighbors constitute at once the strength and the weakness of this often moving study.

After briefly tracing the evolution of the tiny Jewish community in the town since the fourteenth century and analysing its socio-occupational structure during the 1920s (almost all engaged in industry and retail trade and were overwhelmingly middle- or upper- class in status), Frances Henry proceeds to recount the lives of her respondents when confronted with the relentless anti-Semitism of the Nazis. Although the hard-core of the latter comprised no more than a hundred persons in "Sonderburg", their fanaticism which exploited long-standing social differences between the two ethnic groups quickly succeeded in intimidating members of both and in isolating the Jewish minority. As a result, youthful friendships were broken off, adult acquaintances ceased to recognize one another on the street, and when Jews finally decided to emigrate abroad, German neighbors in some cases acquired their property at fire-sale prices. That such departures were frequently delayed until the brutal pogrom of November 1938 (the so-called "Kristallnacht"), which saw synagogues, businesses and homes vandalized and thousands of Jewish males — the author's father among them — sent to concentration

camps, she attributes to the remarkable degree of economic and especially cultural integration that Jews had achieved in Germany prior to the Third Reich. In a penultimate chapter which draws on insights from sociological research on ethnicity in other areas, she persuasively argues that by no means always latent anti-Semitism as well as a Jewish determination to preserve a distinct identity (for example, by discouraging intermarriage) together prevented the total assimilation of Jews even within the generally tolerant environment of "Sonderburg".

A recurring theme in the book is the readiness some Germans displayed to show kindness, or at least behave decently, towards their increasingly terrorized Jewish fellow-citizens, particularly after the war began in 1939. By clandestinely supplying food and other necessities these good people, the author maintains, assisted in keeping alive the handful of Jews remaining in the town until they were deported to Theresienstadt three years later. Of course, when that day arrived most inhabitants of "Sonderburg" retreated behind closed blinds. They were "powerless to help", witnesses told the granddaughter of two of the victims — though she pointedly observes that "very little punishment" (p. 136) was meted out to those who aided Jews there. As for their ultimate fate, Jewish survivors in America are adamant that the townsfolk must have known about Nazi genocide, while the Germans interviewed for the most part insisted upon their ignorance (and therefore their innocence) of the cruel deaths awaiting the deportees.

This stark discrepancy in the post-war reminiscences of Jews and Gentiles not only tends to confirm the author's view of the illusory nature of their pre-Nazi symbiosis. It also suggests the unsatisfactory nature of such sources a half-century after the cataclysmic events they concern, notwithstanding the author's considerable perception in interpreting them, unless they are supported by testimony of other sorts. (Indeed, oral history of this type usually reveals more about contemporary attitudes than it establishes historical fact.) Despite spending "several months" in "Sonderburg", Professor Henry largely eschewed searching local archives, newspapers, and the like for corroborating evidence, though when she has done so on occasion the results are quite telling (cf. the incident of a property settlement involving her grandfather described on pp. 88-89). She even disclaims wanting to present an historically accurate treatment of her topic (p. 7), yet repeatedly insists that what happened in this single town was "representative" of such places in Germany as a whole — "a microcosm of the larger society" (pp. x, 9, 41, etc.). She has consulted various secondary and statistical works to back up this contention; but in how many German towns did just two wealthy Jewish industrialists furnish employment for over half of the labour force (pp. 52, 184)? Nor were the voting results in "Sonderburg" that she presents, which curiously omit the crucial elections of 1932 (pp. 45-46), "typical" of small towns in which two-thirds of the population was Lutheran: only 7.1 percent went Nazi there in September 1930 when the NSDAP made its initial breakthrough nationwide with almost 20 percent of the ballots. Unfortunately, too, the author is prone to embarrassing factual errors, such as the statement that after 1939 "all Jews were forced to wear the yellow arm band" in order to identify themselves clearly as Jews (pp. 80-81); in reality, a yellow star bearing the word "Jew" and sewn to the upper-left side of an outside garment was made obligatory in Germany on 1 September 1941.

It would be unfair, however, to conclude on so negative a note about a book which is strikingly impartial in its judgements. Frances Henry evinces little sympathy for Jews who condemn all Germans as Nazis (eg. p. 101); she is equally critical of those who were content to watch the harsh suffering Nazism inflicted and today wallow in self-pity at the material privations they underwent during the war and afterwards at the hands of the Allies (pp. 140-142). Her compassionate report on these "average" lives spent under totalitarian rule is a worthwhile contribution to the elusive subject of its daily impact upon all of its victims.

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