

collections (why university representatives from Palestine were granted greater freedom of action here is a question that requires further elucidation). The Hebrew University's final agent in Prague, Shilo argues, deliberately misled YIVO about his operations. Through a mixture of political dexterity, deception, and bribery, he managed to have materials delivered to Jerusalem, including some belonging to YIVO. What ultimately became of YIVO's large press collection remains, however, a mystery. Shilo speculates that it was either sold, possibly to the Hebrew University, or integrated into the Czechoslovak national library as the country "nationalized" German property, including – ironically – property seized by the Nazis.

In the final chapter, "Epilog: New York-Jerusalem," Shilo frames the competition between YIVO and the Hebrew University for possession of YIVO's and other collections as part of the competition to determine who was the rightful heir of a murdered Eastern European Jewry. Supported by Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., the organization recognized in 1949 as the legal trustee for heirless Jewish cultural property, Zionists saw the Jewish community in Palestine (and later Israel) as its natural inheritor and the collective address for world Jewry. The Hebrew University even had ambitions to absorb YIVO. YIVO, in contrast, remained resolutely committed not only to maintaining the cultural legacy of Eastern European Jewry but to a Yiddish-speaking future in the diaspora. Astutely, the author points to YIVO's identification with the United States as contributing to its great success in reclaiming property in the American Zone of occupied Germany and its dismal lack of success in the pro-Soviet sphere.

Bilha Shilo adds a layer of depth to our understanding of post-World War II Jewish cultural restitution. With admirable concision and clarity, she depicts a complicated and contested process that unfolded within a few intense years in the context of the legal and political indeterminacy of the immediate postwar era, the competition between rival visions for the Jewish future, and the rising tensions of the emerging Cold War. I disagree, however, with her assessment of failure in Czechoslovakia representing a "harbinger of [YIVO's] subsequent decline in importance in the United States" (118). I view the still-unfolding American chapter in YIVO's history, which remains largely unwritten, as one of creative adaptation to postwar realities rather than, as she maintains, of decline as a now territorially rooted, increasingly English-speaking American institution. Max Weinreich's expressions of pessimism about the future of Yiddish and YIVO's mission in America notwithstanding, he remained active in the institute until his death in 1969. And YIVO remained very much engaged in research and scholarship in Yiddish, as well as to some extent active outside the US, for decades after World War II – even longer than the roughly fifteen years it called Vilna home.

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## **A Nazi Camp near Danzig: Perspectives on Shame and on the Holocaust from Stutthof**

**By Ruth Schwertfeger. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Pp. 225. Hardcover \$115.00. ISBN: 978-1350274037.**

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One would think that almost eighty years after the end of the war, research on the history of the National Socialist concentration camps has developed so far that there is not only more

or less good general knowledge about the most important and largest camps, but also reliable research literature on this topic. However, in her book on the history of the Stutthof concentration camp near Danzig, Ruth Schwertfeger proves that this is a misleading assumption and that there are still important gaps to be filled. This is all the more important and overdue as there is certainly no shortage of sources and documents on the history of Stutthof – the opposite is true (even if both Polish and German language skills are required for research).

Already on the first pages, Schwertfeger makes clear that she has no intention to copy, for instance, Danuta Drywa's and Marek Orski's (both established researchers on the subject) comprehensive books on the topic, but to present a different, specific, but also broader perspective, which is precisely intended for an English-reading audience with a much better balanced mixture between the camp's history and German occupation history in the Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen itself. Therefore, at first glance, Schwertfeger's book might not be a "typical" history of a concentration camp, namely Stutthof, but it is intermingled with references to the camp's perception in the decades following the Second World War, namely in the writings of German Nobel Prize winner Günter Grass. Grass' oeuvre is mainly devoted to Danzig in the 1930s and 1940s, and therefore serves Schwertfeger in quite a number of passages to draw a truthful, albeit literal/fictional picture of Danzig in those years. The debate about the meaningfulness of fiction in historiography is not new, but since the impact of literature, poets, and writers on the entire process of communication and/or commemoration is still underestimated among historians, the Germanist Schwertfeger has solved it in a convincing way for her topic.

There is still no non-Polish history of the City of Danzig after 1933, therefore Schwertfeger's decision to start her study right at a very early stage, namely in 1930, is crucial and sheds light not least on the important Nazi personnel from Danzig (above all Arthur Greiser, after 1939 *Reichsstatthalter* of the Warthegau, and Albrecht Forster, Danzig's NSDAP leader and later *Reichsstatthalter* in the Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia) who later shaped the fate of Danzig, once it was annexed to or "reunited" with the Reich, transformed into a Reichsgau, and rebuilt as a functional part of the Nazi dictatorship, with Stutthof being the local concentration camp for the entire region. It is an astonishing gap in the existing scholarship that Danzig in the 1930s has only very rarely been compared to the stages after the Nazis' seizure of power in the Reich, with Nazification, *Gleichschaltung*, and persecution of political enemies, the Jews, and other minorities being the main steps of Hitler's dictatorship. In doing this, one finds out that in Danzig this process went through exactly the same development as in the "Old Reich," albeit mostly a few weeks or months later, as far as discriminatory laws like the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 or anti-Jewish pogroms in 1938 were concerned.

Referring to Grass, his famous Danzig-related novels – *The Tin Drum* (German in 1959, English in 1961), *Dog Years* (German 1963, English 1965), and others – as well as his later, even more autobiographical texts like *Peeling the Onion* (German in 2006, English in 2008), while drawing a picture of how Danzig became an important part of German historical consciousness after 1945 (at least in West Germany), suffice to show how Stettin or Königsberg never gained a comparable share in this picture of war, terror, and postwar fate and history, because of the lack of famous writers from these cities.

"At what point does Stutthof begin to take shape as a potential place of internment ... ?" (37) The Stutthof civilian prison camp, established in summer 1939 by the Higher SS and Police Leader for Danzig-West Prussia, Richard Hildebrandt, was located approximately 60km east of Danzig. Everything was prepared when the war broke out on September 1, 1939, and the opening of dozens of satellite camps started already in autumn 1939. Under Commandant Max Pauly, Stutthof served as a Gau-level internment camp until 1941. In the early years, most of the prisoners were Poles, especially those suspected of belonging to one of the resistance groups. From autumn 1941, Poles were also sent to Stutthof for refusing to work; also in 1941, women were sent to Stutthof for the first time. A further

change took place a short time later, when in January 1942 the camp got the status of a concentration camp, which meant its organizational subordination under the Inspection of Concentration Camps (IKL).

However, the crucial phase of Stutthof's evolution began in summer 1944. Within a few weeks between July and September 1944, two different groups of Jewish prisoners came to Stutthof on a total of twenty-six transports. The first were around 25,000 Jews from the Baltic countries, where numerous labour camps and subcamps had been liquidated as the Red Army advanced. The second group, comprising 23,500 people, was made up of Jewish prisoners who were transferred to Stutthof from Auschwitz. These were mainly Hungarian Jewish women, many of whom had been deported to Auschwitz only shortly beforehand, as well as Jews from the General Government, from Theresienstadt, and from West Europe. In the following months, Stutthof became a place of death for many thousands of them, which is for Schwertfeger "essential to expanding our understanding of the Holocaust" (10). Altogether, at least 63,000 people died in the Stutthof concentration camp between 1939 and 1945; more than 40 percent of them were Jews (men and women, but mainly women), nearly all of whom died in the camp in the final months of the war or on the death marches.

In Ruth Schwertfeger's book, everything is in its right place, as one can and must expect from a study on the history of Stutthof or a concentration camp in general, with many illuminating references to Günter Grass' oeuvre and to literary reception of the Nazi era as a whole. The inmates, the structure of the mainly local SS guards and high-rank perpetrators, the everyday "life" in the camp, as well as many testimonial voices are exhaustingly dealt with. A very informative appendix with maps and name lists of Stutthof guards and of the main Nazi leaders in Danzig add to the readability of Schwertfeger's book. That said, this book is an excellent read not only for the history of the Stutthof concentration camp but also of Danzig between the 1930s and the end of World War II.

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## **Remembering Histories of Trauma: North American Genocide and the Holocaust in Public Memory**

**By Gideon Mailer. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Pp. xiii + 288. Paperback \$34.95. ISBN: 9781350240636.**

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Gideon Mailer's book compares and links public representations of the Holocaust and North American genocide. He approaches his topic with great sensitivity and compassion; he himself lost family members who were murdered during the Shoah.

Mailer's book is situated at the intersection of a number of distinct historical fields – including early American studies, American Indian studies, Indigenous studies, settler colonial studies, Holocaust studies, and comparative genocide studies. His notes and select bibliography reflect a broad and deep engagement with the massive (and still growing) literature in these fields, as well as some of the many debates and controversies which the convergence of these histories has generated. In addition, it touches on the multidisciplinary fields of trauma and memory studies, public history, and museum studies. To be sure,