Introduction*

This edition of *Yad Vashem Studies* appears several months after the passing of historian Prof. Yehuda Bauer—a member of the Editorial Board and one of the founders of Holocaust studies in Israel and around the world. This is a special issue marking the eightieth anniversary of the end of World War II and begins with a series of memorial articles that present various facets of Bauer's long career in research, public life, and education.

"A time to investigate, a time to contemplate"—in the spirit of this phrase, used in the title of the historian Jacob Katz's last book,[1] one may say that those engaging in historical research, who invest much of their time and energy in critical source-based work, should aim higher from time to time and assess developments in their field of research from a broader perspective. Quite a few historians, like Katz, see the need for such contemplation at the end of their careers thus lending it a personal and autobiographical character. Others revisit earlier stages of their work to present broad historiographic surveys that help us to understand what has been attained thus far in their chosen field of research, what current issues in the field exist, and where we are heading. In our time, in which engaging in memory is part and parcel of research per se—some would say that memory even overshadows research—there are situations in which the critical overview provided by contemplation may also address itself briefly to the social, cultural, and political impacts of the research.

These remarks, valid in regard to historical research generally, seem especially pertinent to Holocaust studies. Holocaust studies, after all, is a cross-disciplinary field that fuses a wide variety of perspectives and national narratives. Given the multiple sensitivities this field evokes in

* To mark this special issue of *Yad Vashem Studies* 53.1, the Editorial Board has invited board member Professor Guy Miron to write the Introduction.

1 Jacob Katz, *'Et Lahkor Ve'et Lehitbonen: Masa Historit Al Darko Shel Bet Yisrael Me'az Tzeto Me'Artzo Vead Shuvo Eleha* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1999).

contemporary public discourse and the memory culture, it behooves scholars to occasionally turn their attention toward the broader contexts of their research and give thought to its public significance. All the central articles in this volume, Volume 53:1, contribute one way or another to the important challenge of contemplation.

Christopher R. Browning, in his article "Holocaust Perpetrator Studies: An Autobiographical Perspective," reviews the main landmarks in his career as a historian who helped to pioneer the field that he calls "Holocaust perpetrator studies." He describes his decision as a young man to pledge himself to Holocaust research, even though his advisor warned him that this field has "no professional future," and links the curiosity that led him to probe the political dynamic that underlay the murder of the Jews to the events of the Watergate affair that inflamed American public discourse when he was a research student. He of course avoids any direct moral comparison of Watergate to the genocide of the Jews but describes a tie that binds them: The craving for power of those who deem themselves above and beyond the law.

Browning describes the difficulties he experienced in publishing his first book about the "Final Solution" with regard to the German Foreign Ministry and goes on to survey the upturn in public interest in the topic that evidenced itself in the United States from the 1970s onward. By the 1980s, he had found his place as a young researcher in the lively historical dispute between intentionalists and functionalists, and, as such, he established a moderate functionalist position and focused on criminals of the "mid-level perpetrator" class. He devotes a central part of his article to the way he formulated the thesis that underlay his book *Ordinary Men* and his debate with Daniel Jonah Goldhagen on the topic. He also shows, by referencing works of other scholars, how investigation of the perpetrators of the Holocaust has become a sensitive, complex, and nuanced field in recent years.

Jan T. Gross, in his article "The Meaning of War: Poland and World War II," offers an interesting contemplation of the attitude of non-Jewish Poles toward the Jews in the Holocaust amid the civil war that had begun during the Soviet occupation and continued under the German occupation. While emphasizing that the Poles were victims of a dual occupation—Soviet and German—he insists that many of them enabled and sometimes even instigated anti-Jewish mass violence. The bystanding of many Poles as the Jews were being murdered—attested in the refusal of the Polish underground to help Jews during the Warsaw

ghetto uprising and also, in certain cases, in their active participation in murdering Jews, as Gross himself shows in his book *Neighbors* in reference to the town of Jedwabne[2]—are presented by Gross as part of a broader process. The mainstream of the Polish national movement, he argues, aimed to seize the opportunity that had come its way under the German occupation to promote the transformation of Poland from a state of multiple minorities into a monolithic ethnic nation-state. Gross even alludes to similar developments in other countries, leading to his presentation of the Holocaust as a "European project." The Polish civil war, as Gross depicts it in the article, is actually continuing today; it is cascading into a struggle for memory between scholars affiliated with the new school of Holocaust studies in Poland, of which Gross himself was a harbinger, and the conservative Polish historiography that denies the existence of anti-Jewish Polish violence as a phenomenon of major importance and refuses to see the Holocaust of the Jews in Poland as an integral part of Polish history.

The development of historiography and the struggles over memory are also central to the conversation between Renée Poznanski and Moshe Sluhovsky titled "The French and the Holocaust in France: A Candid Conversation." Poznanski emphasizes the stinging absence of the Holocaust in France from the mainstream French national memory of the World War II era, which fronts the myth of the Resistance and marginalizes the comportment of the Vichy government. The mainstream's perception of the Holocaust in France, as if it were essentially something that happened between Germans and Jews, lacking any material connection to the conduct of the French—and thus absolving them of historical responsibility—is, Poznanski claims, a continuation of the silence that those of the French Resistance have maintained ever since the war. Although the historiographic picture is more complex, fundamentally it reflects a similar problem. The Jews of France, the conversation brings to light, developed against the background of the silence of those around them, a separate historiographic tradition and historical memory. Poznanski herself, as the conversation shows, is taking part in the struggle to change this reality; in recent years she sees the possibility of the onset of a change that may usher the Jews of France, like other *étrangers*, into the history of France as French.

2 Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors, The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Laura Jockusch's article, "A Postwar Turn? Integrating the 'Aftermath' into Holocaust Studies," offers an up-to-date historiographic contemplation of "aftermath studies"—a subfield of Holocaust studies evolving in recent decades that focuses on the world of the survivors in the immediate post-Holocaust period. Jockusch links the upturn of interest in the world of the survivors as subjects who have agency to the atmosphere that characterizes today's "era of testimony" and growing interest in the question of memory. She stresses the importance of dealing with the aftermath era—which various scholars have defined in various ways—as a distinct period in its own right, but she focuses largely on how this engagement impacts the study of Holocaust research itself. Jockusch's main argument is that the agenda of the documenters and researchers who operated among the survivors in the aftermath period and created what is called in Yiddish *khurbn-forshung* not only anticipated the pivot of Holocaust scholars of the last generation to similar issues but also influenced and, to a large extent, even laid its foundations. Thus she points to the way one may detect in *khurbn-forshung* the onset of the social and cultural history of the Jews under Nazi rule. Moreover, it involved an effort to sketch the world of the German murderers and many members of local peoples who facilitated, benefited from, and sometimes even participated actively in the murder of the Jewish people in addition to the interest in sounding the victims' voices. It was the survivor scholars who, she says, although oblivious to historical conceptualizations of the early twenty-first century, blazed the trail for contemporaneous scholars who are inclined to promote an entangled or integrated history that attempts to offer a broad and multidimensional view of the totality of the events of the time.

The literary researcher Susan Rubin Suleiman's autobiographical article, "Personal History: How I Became a Survivor in my Eighties," offers yet another perspective of contemplation. Suleiman describes the process that led her to act and self-identify as a Holocaust survivor only in the past few years. Suleiman, born in Budapest in 1939 and only four years old when the Nazis invaded Hungary, immigrated to the United States after the war and recently retired from a long career as a literary researcher at Harvard University. Although she studied Holocaust literature extensively within the framework of her research activity, she refrained from identifying herself as a survivor until a short time ago. In the article she describes the complex and gradual process

that she underwent from the 1980s on in reacquainting herself with her personal history from early childhood to her decision, in 2024, to join a group of survivor-witnesses as an active member. Her story reveals the interesting way that the meaning of the "survivor" concept in American public discourse has developed over these decades.

The volume also includes five comprehensive critical reviews of new monographs. Two of the books reviewed illuminate new aspects of the Nazis' policies and the Jews' lives in the ghettos. Katarzyna Person discusses Helene J. Sinnreich's book about the Nazis' policy of starvation in the Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków ghettos: *The Atrocity of Hunger: Starvation in the Warsaw, Łódź, and Kraków Ghettos during World War II*. Naomi Menuhin reviews Maria Ciesielska's *The Doctors of the Warsaw Ghetto* on the approximately 800 Jewish doctors who worked in the Warsaw ghetto, and Jan Láníček surveys Paul R. Bartrop's *The Holocaust and Australia: Refugees, Rejection, and Memory*, which centers on the complex issue of the Australian government's policy toward Jewish refugees from Europe from points of view that include those of Australian society and the local Jewish community. Anton Weiss-Wendt presents Ari Joskowicz's *Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust,* which is an original comparative review of the history and design of the memory of the murder of the Jews in the Holocaust and the genocide of the Roma. Finally, Moshe Zimmermann reviews Roni Stauber's *Diplomatia Be'tzel Hazikaron: Yisrael VeGermania HaMa'aravit, 1953–1965* (Diplomacy in the Shadow of Memory: Israel and West Germany, 1953–1965), concerning the designing of the complex relations between these countries against the background of tension between the constraints of diplomacy and realpolitik and the residues of memory. The matters illuminated in the book, which focuses on the years between the signing of the reparations accord and the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations, include the formation of what Zimmermann calls the myth of the "other Germany."

Have an interesting read.

Guy Miron

Translated from the Hebrew by Naftali Greenwood

Editor's note

Leah Aharonov began working as the English language editor of *Yad Vashem Studies* in 1992. After over thirty years of work on the journal, this issue will be her last, as she has decided to retire. On behalf of the editorial staff and board of *Yad Vashem Studies*, we would like to extend our most profound gratitude for her professionalism, collegiality, and dedication to the journal. Wishing her all the best for the next chapter.