

etwa der Handhabung von Sendungen mit Rückschein eingehalten würden (S. 139). Vor allem ist es andererseits so verdienstvoll wie erhellend, den Text von Poststücken in Abschrift oder als Faksimile zu veröffentlichen – etwa kodierte Bitten um Lebensmittel-sendungen an Verwandte oder Bekannte oder Postkarten, die aus Deportationszügen, die in die Vernichtungslager führen, geworfen wurden – und so den Opfern Namen und Stimme zu geben. Die Studie ist dort besonders eindrücklich, wo sie nicht Postkarten und Briefe zur Illustration von aus der Forschung bekannten Sachverhalten verwendet, sondern in drei Zeitzeugeninterviews (mit einem tschechischen Zwangsarbeiter in Berlin, einer mittlerweile verstorbenen jüdischen Theresienstadt-Insassin und einer Überlebenden des Theresienstädter Familienlagers Auschwitz-Birkenau) postalische Dokumente stützend und bereichernd in die Erzählung einfließt. Ähnliches gilt für die Dokumentation und Einordnung der als perfides Täuschungsmanöver inszenierten „Briefaktion des RSHA [Reichssicherheitshauptamt der SS] (Juden)“ (S. 160–167, Zitat S. 160) aus dem sog. Theresienstädter Familienlager in Auschwitz.

Nützliche Anmerkungen, die unter anderem eine Übersicht der im Ghetto Theresienstadt geltenden Bestimmungen zum Briefverkehr der Insassen sowie ein für Historiker:innen hilfreiches Glossar philatelistischer Begriffe enthalten, runden den Band ab. Dessen Wert besteht im Wesentlichen darin, den Alltag von jüdischen und nichtjüdischen Opfern des Nationalsozialismus aus den böhmischen Ländern anhand postalischer Quellen teilweise neu zu beleuchten und den Betroffenen auf diese Weise wieder eine Stimme zu verleihen. Zudem enthält der Band einige wertvolle Anregungen für weitere lokale Mikrostudien. Allerdings wäre es wohl in Teilen des Bandes methodisch besser gewesen, die Quellen mit Kontext anzureichern, statt den Kontext mit Quellen zu illustrieren. Dies hätte vielleicht auch die unbestreitbare wissenschaftliche Bedeutung und den Erinnerungswert vieler der hier publizierten Quellen noch stärker zur Geltung kommen lassen, vielleicht durch eine durchgängige Verbindung von Faksimile, Transkription und Kontextualisierung. Die Publikation ist dank ihrer Gestaltung und Anschaulichkeit über das engere Fachpublikum hinaus auch für ein breiteres Publikum gut nutzbar und geeignet, Interesse an ihrem Gegenstand hervorzurufen.

München

René Küpper

Andrea Pető: *The Forgotten Massacre*. Budapest in 1944. De Gruyter Oldenbourg. Berlin – Boston 2021. IX, 189 S. ISBN 978-3-11-068748-4. (€ 77,95.)

In today's Hungarian historiography, the persecution of Jews in the 1930s and 1940s, followed by the deportation and murder of more than 400,000 Jews from rural Hungary, is a deeply explored area of historical research. It is also widely known that in addition to the deportations initiated by the German occupiers, numerous atrocities and pogroms took place across the country, with the Hungarian gendarmerie, the Arrow Cross Party, the administrative authorities and part of the Hungarian population being actively involved. In her book *The Forgotten Massacre: Budapest in 1944*, Andrea Pető shows how little we know about such cases, despite the extensive documentation, and also that the truthfulness of allegedly known cases should be questioned.

The author is an internationally renowned historian, doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and a member of the Central European University. Her main research interests are gender studies, oral history, the Holocaust and twentieth century social history. In her research, she has often dealt with taboo topics relating to Hungarian female history. She has conducted pioneering work in the development and processing of the acts of violence by the Soviet Red Army against women at the end of World War II, as well as the activities of women members of the Arrow Cross Party. Her current volume expands this series by examining the activity and conviction of a female perpetrator during and after the darkest chapter of Hungarian history.

The plot of the book can be briefly summarized. On 15 October 1944, Jewish residents were waiting in a “Jewish Yellow Star house” in Budapest for the war to end when an armed unit led by Piroška Dely entered the building. Numerous Jews were murdered and robbed. After the war, some survivors identified Dely in a people’s court, following which she was convicted and executed in 1946. Dely was portrayed in the contemporary press as a negative icon of an “Arrow Cross Woman,” and this attribute was anchored in the collective memory of Hungarian society for the following decades.

P. re-examines this story to reveal the fragmentary evidence that served as the basis of Dely’s 1946 judgment. Using various sources, the book describes the fatal events of that night in October 1944—this part is as thrilling as a crime novel and immediately shows the shortcomings and contradictions of the known documents. It turns out that Dely was not a member of the Arrow Cross Party, her accomplices were never found or arrested, and their identities were never clarified. Not even the question of whether the perpetrators were Germans or Hungarians can be answered, or why they followed Dely’s orders—if they did. The number of murder victims is also unclear; it is by no means identical to the number on the memorial plaque, which was inaugurated as a memorial by the survivors in 1945.

The aim of the volume is not (only) to reconstruct the events of 1944. The author shows that the relatively rich source situation even makes it difficult to determine what actually happened. The length of time to have elapsed since the events, the negligent investigations into the Dely trial in 1946, the state of shock and emotional bias of the witnesses, as well as the barriers to their memory all make a complete reconstruction all but impossible. P. attempts to sort through what happened as an investigator, but she identifies contradictions and open questions again and again. In the end, she draws the reader’s attention to an enormously important problem: that of whether a complete reconstruction of the past is even possible. This begs the question of whether other cases that were previously considered to be well-known could also be questioned if they were similarly deconstructed in detail.

De Gruyter Verlag has published the book in hardcover. The readership is guided through the approximately 120 page narration with the support of numerous illustrations and photos, and subject and name registers. There are other valuable documents in the appendix, e.g. lists of the inhabitants and victims, a chronology of the events, and a so-called *Persilschein* (clean bill of health) signed by survivors for a Christian resident of the house, whose role in the case has not yet been fully clarified.

The book hardly allows any critical comments. Minor spelling mistakes were probably made during the English translation. The reviewer only disagrees with the subtitle because it suggests that the book is about the situation in Budapest in 1944, and that this would be impossible to show on the basis of an individual case, even if the events processed could be regarded as representative. Moreover, the author herself claims that this story is atypical, and most of the volume deals more with the aftermath, the sources and the memory of the massacre, not the events of that fateful night.

In summary, the volume is readable, exciting, compact and informative. P. emphasizes that she wrote her book not only for the specialist audience but also for a broader readership. Due to the style, scope and content of the book, it is actually suitable for addressing laypeople as well. This is all the more desirable because the study not only conveys knowledge, but also explains a great deal regarding the methods, questions, concerns and difficulties of all historical research, all of which constitute issues into which the readership is seldom granted insight.